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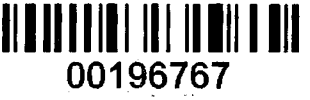
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DECORATION

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SPOTTISWOODE AND CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE
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"Yet Nature is made better by no mean,
But Nature makes that mean; so o'er that art
Which, you say, adds to Nature, is an art
That Nature makes."— SHAKESPEARE.

2514

THE ART OF DECORATION

BY

MRS H. R. HAWEIS

AUTHOR OF
'THE ART OF BEAUTY' 'THE ART OF DRESS' 'CHAUCER FOR CHILDREN'
'CHAUCER FOR SCHOOLS' ETC.

THE ASIATIC SOCIETY
TOWN HALL
MUMBAI
400 001.

A NEW EDITION

WITH NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS

London
CHATTO & WINDUS, PICCADILLY
1889

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Haw/Art
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ART-DESIGNERS IN ENGLAND.

St. Ethelreda, Abbess of Ely, embroideress of the celebrated Opus Anglicum. Seventh century.

Daughters of Edward the Elder, embroideresses of note. Ninth century.

St. Dunstan (Archbishop of Canterbury), goldsmith, painter, and designer. Early tenth century.

Matilda, queen of William the Conqueror, supposed designer of the Bayeux tapestry.

Dame Leviet, Dame Alderet of Winchester, embroideresses to Queen Matilda. Eleventh century.

Alwid and Leuide, embroideresses to Queen Edgitha. Eleventh century.

Edgitha, wife of Edward the Confessor. Eleventh century.

THIRTEENTH CENTURY.

John of St. Omer, court decorator to Henry III.

William Torell, goldsmith and statuary in metal, &c., *temp.* Henry III. and Edward I., died 1300 (designed Queen Eleanor's tomb: Richard de Crundale did the marble-work).

William the Florentine, court decorator to Henry III.

Alexander the carpenter, and John de Spalding, Master Albericus, sculptor. 1253.

Master Robert de Beverley, mason, Westminster Abbey, and his brother Ralph. 1267–8.

Fergas, a brazier of Boston (gave two bells to Crowland Abbey).

William of Sens (France), architect at Canterbury.

Odoricus, designer of Roman inlaid pavement in England, 1267 (Westminster Abbey).

William of Ireland and Alexander of Abingdon, sculptors (Eleanor crosses).

FOURTEENTH CENTURY.

William of Wykeham, architect of Windsor and Winchester Cathedral. 1324–1404.

Walter le Bole, mason, 1342, with costly livery found him, worked at Westminster.

Andrew le Glasswright, of Great Yarmouth.

John of Oxford (worked at Westminster 5 Edw. III.)

Master Yevelee, chief mason there, 1388: Robert Kentbury, Thomas Lippynham, and Thomas Padington, masons.

Adam de Witteneye, a bedder of stone.

G. da Trevigi. 1304–1344. } Carvers
Toto. 1331–1351. }

William de Notyngham, afterwards of Norwich (William Brasiere), and descendants, founders. 1376.

Master John of Gloucester, bell-founder. (20 Edward III.).

Rose de Bureford of London, embroideress to Isabella, queen of Edward II. Early fourteenth century.

Hawkin Liege, from France, sculptor of Queen Philippa's tomb in Westminster Abbey.

FIFTEENTH CENTURY.

Richard de Whittington, Lord Mayor of London under Henry V.: architect of nave of Westminster Abbey. William Colchester, head mason, John Russe, and Richard Knappe, masons under Whittington, receiving costly liveries.

Sir Reginald Bray.

Master Pageny, designed for Henry VII.: was to have made his tomb.

Torregiano (who broke Michael Angelo's nose), worker in marble, bronze, and wood, sculptor of Henry VII.'s tomb under Henry VIII. (the chapel was built by Englishmen, of equal talent, unnamed). 1472–1552.

Torregiano built high Altar, Henry VII.'s Chapel. Effigy by him, in burnt clay, in Chapel of the Rolls, Chancery Lane.
Pupils: Lawrence Umber, 'Kerver'; Humphrey Walker, founder; Nicholas Ewer, coppersmith and gilder.
Drawsherd, Sherif of York, sculptor, Westminster.
Alan Strayler, limner and illuminator, Abbey of St. Albans.
John Bell, Robert Maynard, printers.
John Prudde, glass painter of Westminster. About 1447.
Gervasius, a monk at Canterbury, carver.
Raignold Chyrch, burgess and bell-founder, Bury. 1498.
Thomas Eyrch (his son), gun and bell-founder.
William d'Foundor (the founder) and Thomas of Lynn, founder. About 1483.
Awstyn Bracier (the brazier), bell-founder, &c., *temp.* Henry VII.
Thomas Essex, mason; William Austin of London, sculptor of Richard Beauchamp's monument, in St. Mary's Church, Warwick. 1439.

SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

John of Padua.
Hans Holbein, court painter and designer to Henry VIII. (1509-1547). 1498-1554.
Lucas Penni, employed by Henry VIII. Died 1550.
B. da Rovezzano, carver.
H. Walker.
Ralph Page, Peter Baude, ironcasters in Sussex. 1543.
Nicholas Hilliard, goldsmith, carver, and portrait painter to Queen Elizabeth, and embosser to James I. (son of a gentleman of fortune). Born 1547.
John Tonne, cast bells in Sussex and Essex. 1540.
George Clarke, bell-founder, and John Dier. 1564.
Thomas Draper, founder, and Mayor of Thetford. 1592.
Jan van den Gheyn and Peter van den Gheyn, bell-founders. 1558-1580.
Mark Gerards, designer for glass, architecture, &c. 1561-1635.
Inigo Jones, architect to James I. 1573-1653.
George Heriot, goldsmith to James I.

SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

John Dwight, M.A., Christ Church, Oxford, potter and inventor of Fulham porcelain in England. 1671.
Nathanael Stone, of Exeter: sculptor of various tombs at Westminster, probably of Mary Stuart and Queen Elizabeth.
Nicholas Stone, master mason to James I., sculptor of the tomb [illegible]illiers, Westminster Abbey.
Henry Stone, called 'Old Stone,' painter and stonemason. Died 1653.
J. Fuller, painter, and son — Fuller, coach-painter.
Henry Gyles of York, glass-painter. About 1687.
Peter Paul Rubens.
Francis de Cleyn, master of tapestry works. Died 1658.
Gibson, the dwarf, page to Charles I., and portrait-painter.
Hubert de Sueur, sculptor of equestrian statue of Charles I.
John Baptist Gaspars, designer. Died 1691.
William Lightfoot, architect. Died 1671.
Marchant, Brown, Tassie, Pistrucci, cameo workers.
Sir Christopher Wren, architect. 1632–1723.
Grinling Gibbons, wood-carver and sculptor. 1648–1721.
Laureans, Watson, &c., pupils of Gibbons.
Francis Place, (amateur) designer. 1645–1728.
Tobias Norris, John Clark, William Newcome, Hugh Watts, H. Oldfield, Miles Grey, &c., bell-founders.
Monsieur Rotiere, graver of the Mint and sculptor. About 1677.
Wise, Rayman, and Barak Norman, fiddle-makers and inlayers.

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

John Hakewell, artist and house-painter. Died 1791.
James Wyatt, Adams (brothers), Sir W. Chambers, James Gibbs, Vanbrugh, William Kent (first landscape gardener), architects.
John Baker, coach-painter.
Angelica Kauffmann (painted cabinet panels). 1742-1808.

John Flaxman, John de Vaere, Webber, Angelo Dalmazzoni, Angelini (designed for Wedgwood's pottery).

T. Chippendale and his son, Baker, Capitsoldi, Ceracci, Cipriani (decorated Carlton House), Coit, Collet, C. Cotton, Davy, A. Heppelwhite (published in 1789 designs for 'Empire' furniture), Hyman, Johnson, J. Linnell, Matthias Lock (published designs of furniture of every kind), and Copeland, Pergolese, Pigalle, Sheraton (published an extensive Dictionary of his trade), Totham, Voyers, Wilton, Gillow, designers for furniture.

Banks, John Duke, the Forsters, the Fendts, fiddle-makers and inlayers.

Moser, modeller of Bow china, originally a chaser.

Thomas Frye and his daughters (painted Bow). 1710–1762.

John Bacon, sculptor (modelled for Lambeth ware). About 1760.

NINETEENTH CENTURY.

[In a list so mixed and necessarily brief it is impossible to mention all names, and it must suffice to quote those artists best known, as originators, not imitators, of a school, and the firms best able to employ good workmen.]

Sir Jeffrey Wyatt, or Wyattville, architect to George IV.

Joseph Paxton, architect.

Crace and Co. (a fashionable firm, middle of the century).

Evans, of Shrewsbury, glass-painter.

Clayton and Bell, glass-workers.

W. J. Aitchison, architect (has designed for furniture).

Gillow and Co. (a firm of decorators, employing skilled labour).

Minton & Co.

Owen Jones, art designer and decorator, author of valuable works on art.

Pugan, architect, designer, and writer on art, on Gothic and Mediæval principles.

J. M. Whistler, artist; designer of the 'Peacock Room' and furniture on Japanese principles.

Cottier and Co., decorators, and workers in decorative glass.

Powell and Co., glass works of all kinds, including stained glass windows

William Morris, art designer (in all branches), scholar and poet.

Burne Jones, artist, designer of stained glass, &c., for Morris and Co.

Walter Crane, artist (has designed for embroidery, wall-papers, &c.)
Charles Eastlake, keeper of the National Gallery (has designed for plate, furniture, &c.)
Burges, architect and decorator, on Mediæval principles.
Helbronner and Co. (dépôt for textile fabrics copied from ancient sources).
James Fergusson, F.R.S., architect and author of valuable works.

First Book

The Search after Beauty

CHAPTER I.

he A Revolt.

M ple are w alive to the importance of as a ing influence. The appetite istic i uction is even ravenous. We be hankful that it is so, for the vacuur filled easily as purse can be emptie ow e shop bris with the ready means awi and *objet vertu* from all countr in ybody's r , and all that is lackin l po of choice.

It end our to poi ut in these pages that c ns, to warn eaders that beauty and a wa rely upo e tidal flow of new thoug e in stagnan ol. The mind which blindl shi simply l use they are fashionable, ng o discrimina e in what the new is better d, ay be said to resemble those caged reptili m ng without discretion flesh, feathers, and b ce

No doubt things ar e rapidly mendi n domestic art. People brought u , in that fog wh the French Revolution left us flou ndering in, pee who loved sunsets and flowers and music may be o sketched scenery, enjoyed Byron, and went pu ly to the Royal Academy—but sca rcely noticed own walls and carpe (I speak of th e mass of d society thirty yea ago)—these p eople woke me time since to th influence of sur roundings ni d and temper. Th y began to resent the and ugliness wh h their indiffe nce had round them, and th y inaugurated ind of Faith in art.

How long since did the ogged gin to yield to individual efforts? V was th o who pulled up and burnt his 'chee patte els, in scarlet and sour green? Wh rst so wing-room 'suite'—l velvet sofa ked n—his six small chairs ith torturing acks, chairs, vile marquetry t e, and gilt sole? hodox 'chiffonier' of un ning shap ith k that reflected our frigh bodies in ic foc mirror-doors that made f of our det ed l other: and all the floriated lse curves d fl round (not carved) in ma ogany and ued they were likeliest to be knocked -all 'em-bossed mouldings' (so glued on), reca ng, in their vacant misconst uction of class ic t iman teeth, or emblems of disease inge nio cted: where are these horrors now?

They are all relegated to the ic ouse,

along with the glossy white walls and rattling and writhing fender, and the rampant-lion rug.

We can all rejoice at this result: but few of us can apply the moral, for few remember whence the horrors sprang, or realise that all this outrageous vulgarity of design and bad, scamped work, was the final British version of something in itself good—nay, the apotheosis of art as applied to furniture—the fashion of Louis Quatorze.

What has come, as a reaction, is just sufficiently better to express the popular sense of having done wrong. Society has confessed its sins and promised to amend: but there is always the risk when running from the 'lion in the path' that we shall run straight into the jaws of another. Alas! the new faith has assumed a livery quite as forced as the old one: quite as ugly. It often threatens to be, with stiff patterns instead of flowing ones, morbid colours instead of gay ones, but equally ill-proportioned, vulgar, and machine-begotten, perhaps *more* depressing. The New Art furniture at its worst is a very ghastly parody on its name, and without the wholesome discipline of enlightened discrimination I fear that it has a future more dismal still than any previous fashion.

The Natural Basis.

If people would think for themselves, turning over the leaves of Nature's book instead of simply aping others, we should have more comfort and more beauty in our homes.

At present our eyes seem blinded by prejudices rooted so long ago that we have forgotten their origin. We should never have asked whether the culture of beauty is good for us, had we observed that beauty simply means the harmonious adaptation of each thing to its purpose and to the purposes of the rest; that the mere forces of nature, such as growth, circulation, balance, and all other laws resulting from eternal attraction and repulsion, are the parents of curves and colours, which have no moral significance unless we impart it. And we should never have pushed culture too far if we would have taken a hint from the humblest creatures which select their habitations and adapt their array to circumstances.

To be healthy and happy, we must have beautiful and pleasant things about us. If we cannot have trees and flowers, mountains and floods, we can have their echoes—architecture, painting, textiles in changing light and shade.

Every nation reflects its surroundings in its art, while its art is spontaneous, not scholastic, and that is how schools of art have grown up. Art may be said to be good wherever natural laws dictate it, and bad in proportion as it sets natural laws at defiance; this, whether there be any conscious attempt to *copy* nature or not. From the Chinese effects indirectly derived from their transparent atmosphere, their dazzling and involved foliage, and their strange beasts, down to the quaint homely art of colourless Iceland it seems as if nature were working through us ever outward.

Thus Art, if we will suffer it, becomes a natural

chronicle; though we can hardly estimate progress by any particular cult. To-day, energy runs rather to books than carvings, but picture and language are equally the expression of thought. The ancients talked and looked about them: we write and read.

But surely of late one kind of expression has been unduly neglected, and the pictorial kind to which we usually apply the term Art is better than mere language because it can please the eye without making incessant demands upon the brain. It unites us more completely with outward nature; it can delight a thousand eyes and hear[illegible] once; it draws us out of ourselves; and its varia[illegible]ess is infinite. Art properly applied should coun[illegible]t the influence of books, which nurse the mode[illegible]nt towards privacy and self-contained reserve.

A[illegible] the kinds of art which are right and proper, every[illegible] has its particular wants and its particular expre[illegible], but no age which truly loves beauty will confi[illegible]art to very narrow limits; the more it studies beaut[illegible] more elastic it finds it. And if we will give scope[illegible]e impulse and not bind it in with 'bits and bear[illegible]ns,' it will take care of itself independently of 'a[illegible]l' and all orthodox lines.

[illegible]re, people who formulate, and who follow, a fashi[illegible]ch is not the natural outcome of the time, are n[illegible] be relied on as teachers of what is absolutely good [illegible]ad in art. They are sure to be hoodwinked by t[illegible]ejudices, and seeing but one small side of beau[illegible]nselves, they are apt to try and make everybod[illegible]e that no other side exists.

[illegible]erybody is apt to believe it, because, when

we don't much *care*, it is convenient to have some one to think for us, and the sheepwalk is soon beaten out in a new direction with as little profit as ever to the sheep. When the mass agree in overshooting the mark, some sensible person points out that this is not all the world consists of—that a few other ideas remain to be worked up—and a reaction sets in with a violence proportioned to the previous excess.

Such is the history of every fashion, as I have elsewhere shown:[1] the rise—usually from a basis of good sense—the apogee, and the decadence, in which the original motive is lost, as surely as the messa[illegible] in the old game of 'scandal,' then reform, and *da capo*.

This is what is happening now. We to[illegible] Louis Quinze (as the *finale* of Louis Quatorze) to p[illegible]es till he became abhorrent: then came the invar[illegible] recoil from ornate to simple forms: but it is as e[illegible] to vulgarise poverty of thought as splendour, an[illegible]en we see what British vulgarity made of a sc[illegible] based on the most gorgeous interpretations of cl[illegible] types (found in luxurious Athens and Rome), we[illegible] predict what it would do for a school never[illegible] gobd from the first, being based on a servile co[illegible] early Greek modes (temp. Napoleon I.—withou[illegible]ourse) any of the natural conditions which evolved[illegible] modes of early Greece).

These 'First Empire' copies are what w[illegible]copying now under the imaginary name of 'Q[illegible]nne.' I shall presently compare them with t[illegible]nuine

[1] This inevitable tendency has been spoken of in my bo[illegible] *Art of Beauty* and *The Art of Dress*.

fashions in the reign of that queen. And these copies of other copies are an affectation quite as artificial as the imitation 'Louis Quinze' curves we have just done with. The fashion is not the natural growth of our age, for Britain is now in no ascetic or squeamish mood. Without the renewing of fresh vigour and new thoughts every fashion becomes vulgar and effete, as a body dies when the blood ceases to circulate in it. Hence the present 'æsthetic' craze, when it does not represent individual thought and effort, is as poor and parrot-like as any other craze that had led intelligent creatures astray.

Beauty.

An object is beautiful or the reverse according as it pleases the eye, and a combination of objects is beautiful or the reverse according to their harmony with each other. All this depends as much on graceful shadows as on lights.

In painting a picture, the artist has to consider 1st, colour (which includes form); 2nd, keeping (which governs colour).

Technically speaking, by 'colour' is meant not so much any particular tint or tints, as the arrangement of all tints in an agreeable composition: by 'keeping' is meant an arrangement so skilful that the eye is not confused by the variety of incidents however many, but falls at once on the main point of interest to which every thing works up, and at once receives a definite impression of the *ensemble* as 'cold' or 'hot,' tender or severe.

A room is like a picture; it must be composed with equal skill and forethought; but unlike a picture, the arrangement must revolve around to a point which is never stationary, always in motion; therefore the 'keeping' becomes a problem far harder than the colour.

The main point of interest to which the decorations should work up, is the inhabitants; but as they can never be reckoned upon, the picture must be composed as it were without the subject, like a poem without a point or a story without an end. This must be done by keeping the tone of colour down. That is to say, one part must not be so much more decorated than another as to put the rest out of tune; the general tone or corresponding value of contrasting tints must be equalised, in subservience to the living beings that are yet to come in. Still, there should be 'keeping'—some main point or nucleus where interest centres, and where the chief colours may be grouped, *en attendant* the main object.

It has always seemed to me that in this cold country the fireplace is the most natural nucleus; and it is probably because this has been unconsciously felt, that people range their best ornaments, the biggest mirror, the clock, the candlesticks, &c. upon the mantel-shelf.

In summer, some bay-window or shady niche might be the best nucleus, where the flowers in gayest pots, the curtains of softest folds, might be grouped; and in some such spot of main brilliancy the inhabitants, who would be sure to gravitate thither, would be the better thrown up and set off.

People always go to the prettiest and brightest part of the room, by instinct—at any rate young people will

(Bulwer observed that, in some note of his anent the sunny and shady sides of a street); and if the prettiest part of the room is also the most comfortable, they will stay there.

Group therefore the easiest and best-shapen seats where you wish people oftenest to sit: place there the ornaments of finest colour—an oriental jar of turquoise and orange, a brazen shield, a fine clock, flowers, or whatever makes the brightness of the room; then this shrine, so prepared for habitation, must have its main colouring carried out by other parts of the room, and this will be the less difficult where the ornaments are many and antique.

Every standard scheme of colour, Egyptian, Greek, or what not, is based upon an intuitive knowledge of the rules of harmony; and such knowledge is best studied at the fountain-head, Nature. Remember, a landscape is the finest of all backgrounds—perfect in itself; and when life is introduced, still perfect: perfect from afar, perfect on close scrutiny. And from nature we learn that it is not the poverty or simplicity, but the variety and closeness of invention, which makes a work grand. Thus in the colour-art as in the sister art, music, we may attain the most varied effects by happy combinations. The rules of art are wide, not narrow, and will admit all tastes; hence, many schools contribute to the general fund of beauty, all good in their way, and yet a certain kind may appeal to this mind or that, more than another kind; for individual opinion must be admitted to be free, even where it rejects 'the better part.'

'No colour harmony,' says Ruskin somewhere, 'is of

high order, unless involving indescribable tints;' and it has also become an axiom that to satisfy the eye and produce harmony of colour, the presence [illegible] all the three primaries [1]—blue, yellow and red—is requir[illegible] either pure

[1] Those who do not understand the technical terms in [illegible] may be glad to know that the mixture of the primary colours makes the secondary colours; the mixture of the secondaries forms the tertiary hues; thus—

Red, Blue, Yellow	Primary	
Red + Blue	Purple	Secondary
Blue + Yellow	Green	Secondary
Yellow + Red	Orange	Secondary
Green + Orange	Citrine	Tertiary
Orange + Purple	Russet	Tertiary
Purple + Green	Olive	Tertiary

Complementary Colours, as seen on diagram below.

a—a
b—b
c—c
&c.

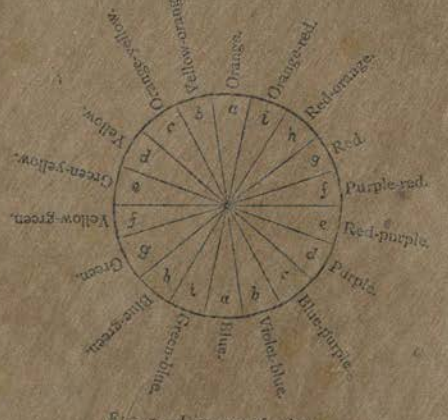

FIG. 1.—Diagram of colour.

or in combination. But this does not mean that big masses of blue, red, and yellow are ever to be placed in discordant juxtaposition—only that these colours, in some fit degree or tint, are to relieve the eye from surfeit. For uniting pure colours, the quieter greys, browns, or any of the tertiaries, with all their respective tones of intensity (for which see Redgrave's or any other manual), are invaluable. I have here shown by a diagram what is meant by primary, secondary, and tertiary colours, and every colour admitted in a noticeable mass should be balanced somewhere by its complementary (which stands opposite it in the diagram). Without due balance colour, like form, leaves an uncomfortable impression on the eye, and what constitutes balance I have defined elsewhere (p. 203). A little red goes as far in producing an effect as a good deal of blue; a still smaller quantity of yellow produces as great a one. The proportions have been defined as 8 blue, 5 red, 3 yellow; still, the nicely calculated rules of colour as laid down by the profession might be rigidly adhered to with a very unpleasant effect, and a fine effect is sometimes got in defiance of rules; therefore no manual is as safe as an 'eye for colour.' This is a faculty so happy and so subtle that it may fairly be called a sixth sense. And a room, or a dress, arranged after that true natural instinct will always be beautiful, however surprising; the boldest combinations will 'look right,' for they will always be found to be based on observation of Nature.

Precise and immutable as are, no doubt, those natural laws, they are still in process of discovery, and the loving study of a sweet pea or a daisy, for its grace of fibre, its

strength of elastic build, its dainty contrasts of purple and white and red, will teach us more than all the manuals, perhaps more than all the picture galleries. I shrink, myself, from dissections and skeletons, even of the rainbow, for if we are not born with an eye for beauty, they cannot give it us. No study of counterpoint can give us an ear for music, no spectrum analysis pleasure in a dragon-fly's mail. Watching Nature, practising combinations learnt from her, is the real school; and in all the finest decorative works we find the masses distributed in such a way as could have been derived only from the basis of art—Nature.

Stothard kept a collection of butterflies which he studied for hints upon colour and texture. Blake strolled out and questioned the flowers and dew-drops till every blade and grain had for him its fairy, its special voice. Some colour-students have kept birds' eggs for the same purpose; and every bit of ore, every shell, every feather has its own perpetual lesson for our eyes and minds if we will but open them. And valuable as are the rules of art, pressed from the experience of ages of thinkers, Nature will ofttimes deny them all, and send the primrose to prove that yellow and orange may mix, with or without light green—its blossom and leaf; or the lupin, that blue and lilac are a happy combination; or the tulip, that scarlet and crimson and white may be divided by faint blue; and half her kingdom to tell us that in spite of green being unpopular with the milliner and upholsterer, it is the colour above all others which 'goes' with all the rest—the peacemaker, on whom they all rely.

When we are planning out the picture we mean to live in, the room that we wish to make a background for the highest created animal, humanity, it is certainly worth while to take our best pains if art is anywhere important *per se*. And I am by no means sure that the total neglect of art-lore and the patient study of a flower or two will not result in something noble and beautiful, however unlike other people's work. One thing is certain, that a room where the main decorations are composed of the carefullest productions of antiquity—say, at least before 1700—will be more easy to keep in harmony than a very modern room, however costly its ornaments, because colours were less shrewdly distilled, more cloudy and soft; and it will be more interesting, because the ornaments were made under the influence of comparative leisure and freedom; leisure to observe nature, leisure to reason from nature to art, leisure to *conceive*, and to work at the new-born idea until the workman got to love it, before sending it forth to the world. Never was the saw of the wise king of Spain truer than now: 'Give me old wood to burn, old wine to drink, old books to read, and old friends to talk to:' when referred to house-decoration. The modern productions made after the old manner, as by Minton, Doulton, and at Valéry, with laboriously dimmed tints and careful crookednesses, are as different from the *real* old things as a tame daisy is from a wild one—and always remind me of a very artful lady acting the wood-nymph, a sort of Venus in a bonnet and veil! There is no spontaneity in them, the effects don't come because they must, but because they are calculated on; so that, however well a

thoroughly modern room is arranged, it wearies, and wants freshness.

The details of furniture are little less important, though they are certainly not more important, than dress, by reason of their intimate propinquity to ourselves. This must infallibly have been felt by students of beauty in all ages, and helped the formation of every school of art. The human surroundings react so continually upon the cultured mind that we are inclined to endorse the old Italian notion (at Italy's apex of culture) of a beautiful dress as a genuine element in the perfection of the individual;[1] and in old England Italian sentiment on

[1] 'Even the outward appearance of men and women and the habits of daily life were more perfect, more beautiful, and more polished than among the other nations of Europe. The dwellings of the upper classes fall rather within the province of the history of art, but we may note how far the castle and the city mansion in Italy surpassed in comfort, order, and harmony the dwellings of the northern noble. The style of dress varied so continually that it is impossible to make any complete comparison with the fashions of other countries, all the more because since the close of the fifteenth century imitations of the latter were frequent. The costumes of the time, as given us by the Italian painters, are the most convenient and most pleasing to the eye which were then to be found in Europe; but we cannot be sure if they present the prevalent fashion, or if they are faithfully reproduced by the artists. It is nevertheless beyond a doubt that nowhere was so much importance attached to dress as in Italy. The people was, and is, vain: and even serious men among it looked on a handsome and becoming costume as an element in the perfection of the individual. At Florence, indeed, there was a brief period when dress was a purely personal matter and every man set the fashion for himself: and till far in the sixteenth century there were exceptional people who still had the courage to do so, and the majority at all events showed themselves capable of varying the fashion according to their individual tastes. It is a symptom of decline when Giovanni delle Casa warns his readers not to be

this matter found some echo, as we may judge from Chaucer's emphatic notice of persons' dresses.

Furniture is a kind of dress, dress is a kind of furniture, which both mirror the mind of their owner, and the temper of the age; which both minister to our comfort and culture, and they ought to be considered together.

Exquisite Obstructives.

Right and delightful as it is to cultivate beauty, it is no doubt possible to carry the 'lust of the eye' too far like other things. Those 'æsthetic' folks who worship Signorelli, and sit among blue china and green paper mourning over the 19th century and yearning for the Past like the lost Children in the Wood for the departed uncle, sometimes make us think we might be cloyed with beauty (if this be its haunt), till we would hail tripe and onions on Judson-dyed china for a relief.

There are other colours in the rainbow beside green and blue: the present is as good in its way as the past. Such teachers are far from helpful, save that they show us that if Taste means sensibility and judgment, there may be unhealthy sensibility and prejudiced judgment —and both may be affected. One of the reasons why average culture does not progress very fast, is because those who might guide it seem to study nature with such resolute obliquity of vision, and practise speaking the simplest things in the obscurest language, and 'pose'

singular or to depart from existing fashions.'—*The Renaissance in Italy* (Burckhardt), translated by S. G. C. Middlemore.

and attitudinise so sedulously, that patience gives way before them and Culture gets blamed for the follies of its disciples. But whilst we accept the fact that rotten grass may taint a fair stream, we must not therefore give up the stream nor the grass in the meadow, but rather try to set the balance straight by cutting down the unhealthy products.

The past certainly produced more beautiful works than we do, and I hope to show, in a brief retrospect of ancient rooms, how much we may learn in the old schools. There are many reasons why it did so; though I doubt whether early art consciously aimed at being beautiful and pleasing (as, e.g., Renascence art did), so much as it aimed at being helpful and instructive, turning to edifying account every flat surface within reach.

One reason is, the old artists had ample time and a limited demand; now, there is a large demand, and limited time allowed. They worked by hand where we work by machinery; and the difference between the one, which bears evidence of an individual mind, over the other, which is quite unintelligent, must be clear to all. The force that with us runs into genre pictures only and perhaps literature, then ran into bronze-casting, stone-cutting, wood-carving, and missal-colouring: for carvings were the books of the people; art was their common library, so to speak; hence it was so largely used to expound religious precepts. Under such circumstances we can understand how the personal religion of the workman, or superstition if we choose to call it so, often rendered his work conscientious as well as quaint.

Still, the past was dirty and cruel, enslaved and

suffering; we are better, morally, socially, physically, though we do not so much appreciate ornament. A far larger community is civilised, able to afford luxuries, and in a great hurry for them. And though religion does not enter into the artisan's scheme of work, and he can neither be terrified nor bribed into fervour, yet on the whole we are safer, healthier, freer, happier than ever we were.

Not that there was no bad, scamped work then as now; or varying qualities in tapestry and wainscot, of which the bad specimens have perished whilst the few best have survived. Not that everyone in Signorelli's day was as great as Signorelli. Rotten grass has existed from the beginning of the world. But it is in our power to weed away what is bad in all departments of life; and if we applied as much pressure to the labourers as we might if we ourselves knew right from wrong; if we appreciated the value of conscientious brain-work and honest study of nature in art-products as most cultivated people *don't*, we might now have results as beautiful as ever our ancestors had, and far more numerous. The supply always in the long run equals the demand. When we know what we want, we shall get it, but no class of persons so materially hinders the wholesome and wide-reaching reformation in domestic art as the class who sit aloof and say that art is not for the people but for the elect,[1] that the 19th century is dead to beauty and the case hopeless—for they not only cause the Philistines to blaspheme, and make the new efforts ridiculous, but they exercise a numbing and

[1] See Mr. Poynter's letters in the *Times*.

depressing influence on those with whom the carrying out of the reform greatly lies, the better-educated tradesmen, who lose heart even with good intentions.

Art is for the People.

Changes must emanate from the public, not from their servant, the producer: for it is they who pay for it, not any elect body. The painter paints for the Royal Academy, but it is the people who buy his pictures. The musician composes an opera—the people support or condemn it. The poet writes, and the people publish his work if he expresses their thoughts—not without. Emerson puts it quaintly, that we love 'those who tell us what we know;' and the main value of art lies in its education of the people, the drawing out in noble form what is already there. Naturally, the upholsterer cannot afford to be independent of the people—he must supply their demand, and give them as little for their money as they will accept. And here is the point—what do the people want and care for in domestic art? for what they insist upon they will assuredly get.

Educate the public that they may recognise what is good, whether in colour, shape, or construction. Educate the workman that he may be equal to the coming demand. Give him an interest in his work. Separate the good art-workman from the human machine who spends his life in making only legs, or only scrolls, or some other fractional part of a design which he never sees in its entirety and therefore cannot contribute

intelligently to. But *no one can educate him but the customer*. He cannot subsist on an ideal.

We know more, we notice more, than we did. Let us guard ourselves from old errors in a new direction by examining the principles of beauty in what we admire—every one for himself. This, and this only, is the secret of originality.

To care for beauty, to nurse our precious freedom to think for ourselves and to do as we like in art-matters, to avoid the fatal sheep-walk which the timid and ignorant so soon beat out, the stereotyped house of the stereotyped art-decorator, to give our individual stamp to our own little *propriété* in the common heritage of the Beautiful; this is what we have to do, this is the way to create a new, a national school of art in England, and the way to carry into domestic life pleasant and refining influences.

Having now laid down my premisses (not, I hope, too sweepingly), that rooms and their furniture should be beautiful; that beauty is confined to no people and to no period; that blue and green are not the only colours in the rainbow; and that the present 'æsthetic' craze unvitalised by new blood is poor and parrot-like; I will proceed to more practical hints on the art of decoration.

CHAPTER II.

Surroundings.

THE importance of surroundings and their effect on personal appearance is very considerable. People certainly look different in different rooms. Some look vulgar in one place and refined in another, just as some look pretty in one dress and plain in another. A pale person against a pale wall paper disappears; whilst in a well-coloured room human pallor may be set off and made pleasing. A person of high colour in a room full of hues which do not properly contrast with herself either derives so much reflected glow that she becomes empurpled and fiery, or else her personality is destroyed by the surroundings over-assimilating or absorbing her, so that she becomes a mere letter in an alphabet of violent colour.

In my book, the 'Art of Beauty,' the suggestion that surroundings ought to be adapted to persons, and the colours of rooms to their inhabitants, was much misunderstood. A great deal of small fun was made out of my supposed assertion that ladies should dress up to

their rooms, or re-decorate them to suit every new dress, or refuse to dine out without a warranty of the colour they were expected to sit against. Of course all this was wide of the mark. What I did say, and what continued observation has confirmed me in, is, that rooms being a background for human beings, and coloured surfaces having definite artistic relations to one another, different hues must be arranged with thought and skill where juxtaposition to faces and complexions is unavoidable, i.e., not only in dress, but in the wall papers and furniture of rooms. Not that people are to adapt themselves to their walls, but that their walls are to be adapted to them; not that there are to be special niches and panels where fair beauties or dark beauties, or ladies in red, green, or yellow, are to sit, loll, or stand, but that a room, in its decoration and general colouring, is to be regarded as an accessory to the main object, the individual, and to be so skilfully planned that dark and fair, red, green, and yellow persons, are equally well treated within it, and look equally well. Nor must this be thought impossible or impracticable, for there is no doubt that there are certain colours which are infallibly good backgrounds, just as there are others which are unmistakably bad backgrounds: that these are not few but many, and that they are not all blue-green or green-blue, very little experience can teach—in short, nearly every colour and material may be combined into a harmonious whole with a little care and artistic reflection.

One of my strongest convictions, and one of the first canons of good taste in house decoration, is that our

houses, like the fish's shell or the bird's nest, ought to represent our individual tastes and habits, never the habits of a class. Fishes are not all herrings, birds are not all sparrows; let us, too, accentuate the varieties which exist among us. There is nothing so foolish, nothing so destructive to the germination of real taste and art-feeling in England, as the sheeplike English inclination to run in a flock. Instead of using their brains and eyes, people cry out, 'What shall I do?' or worse, 'What do other people do?' and directly they find out they do it too, like babies. This manner of proceeding reminds me of a young lady whom I once taught to sketch from nature, and who drew a line or two and then asked me, 'Where is the next line to go to?' 'Look and see,' was all I could reply—the very last thing she thought of doing.

Why will not people use their own faculties, and judge for themselves what looks best here or there, and so contribute something new and individual to society?

Unintelligent Adoption.

If you adopt other people's ideas, you ought to have some better reason than *because* someone else does it. 'Tis poor feeding where the flavour of the meat depends on the cruets,' said Mrs. Poyser, and it is a poor fashion which has not its own apology in grace and good sense.

It is marvellous what mistakes we may fall into unless we observe whether or no Precedent defies Propriety. No thoroughly bad fashion would ever take a

firm hold on society were it not for the indolence of those who can, but will not, think for themselves, and the timidity of those who dread what is new. For instance, one hears ladies laying down the law in this style: 'You must have old point on your mantel-shelf; it is indispensable. Everyone has it!' Yet good sense tells us that a delicate fabric designed to adorn a lady's dress is as unsuited to the rough and dusty service of furniture close to the fire as a pearl necklace or ostrich plumes. Why, therefore, 'must' we adopt a freak of luxury, founded on neither good sense nor good taste? Again, we hear, 'Fire ornaments are quite gone out; you must stick a Japanese parasol in the stove, or fill it with tinsel and waterlilies.' It matters not how outrageous the notion—primroses planted in the fender, a rockery of ferns, a scent fountain playing up the chimney, or a white satin bow from the register—the argument is always the same: 'I am telling everybody of it, and they are all doing it!'

This is the way in which foolish fashions speedily infect a whole community, because each person is afraid to be independent, or likes to have somebody to think for her. I quote the stove, because no other part of the house has been so tortured into a false position or an unnatural aspect; yet why, in this uncertain clime, a fire-place is never to confess its name when not in use, any more than a chair or a piano, I do not know.

It seems to me better that a thing should be candidly acknowledged in disuse than made ridiculous by misuse, and it is better to risk being called eccentric than to follow a bad example; yet, given that a fire-place ought

reasonably to serve as a flower-pot or a fish pond in summer, and that a mantel-shelf ought to be dressed like a lady, if a fine were imposed on everybody who copied her neighbour's work the result would be interesting as the products of original minds, for the various methods, if not all good, would be certainly all new.

Good sense is the basis of all that is beautiful, and details of ornament as well as the *ensemble* ought to be the natural result of our habits and tastes. Without the renewing of fresh vigour and new thought, every fashion becomes vulgar and effete, as a body lies when the blood ceases to circulate in it. Hence the present æsthetic craze, when it does not represent individual thought and effort, is as poor and parrot-like as any other craze which has led intelligent creatures astray.

People require teaching, helping, forcing to develop their own resources and to evolve their own tastes. The schoolboy is punished for using a 'crib,' not because it is wrong, but because it is his duty to exercise his brains. And, although a foolish opposition to all reigning habits may become equally weak, for people should have the courage of their opinions—courage even to echo if need be, without limiting their speech to a continual echo—yet those would-be leaders are stumbling-blocks to progress who say, 'This is done, therefore do it.' Nay, do not go on nibbling at the half-eaten grass—move onward to pastures new, little lambs.

Harmony.

The fashionable practice of modelling rooms too severely upon a single period is open to grave objections. It binds fetters of iron on the owner, who can never work-in any new element, however beautiful. It seems to destroy liberty of action; and, moreover, when the room is habited, the sense of propriety is outraged by the impossibility of confining the dresses of the guests—or, indeed, the manners and customs—to the required li A newspaper or a piano is an anachronism in a Queen Anne (not 'Empire') room, and I know Annites who consistently banish both. Tea would be an anachronism in a Tudor room; or at least, if it ought to be spoken of by its native name *tcha*, with accented *a*), as it was in this country when it first appeared, being written *chaw* here in 1615, and *chia* by the Portuguese.

Sensitiveness to anachronisms naturally increases with attention, but too severe consistency—fair enough as an antiquarian freak—when elevated into a system seems to me intolerable, since our walls and furniture were made for us, not we for them.

Still, a happy liberty must not be confounded with outlawry—a feverish effort to be different from others often results in disagreeable eccentricities—but that some sort of harmony with surroundings is needful in dress and bearing I shall strive to show. It stands to reason that (short of preparing a 'specimen room,' or a museum for reference only) it is better to allow some

latitude to modern tastes and requirements than to trammel all the guests with laws and liveries, or to have to suffer in silence the incongruity one has learnt to feel too acutely.

Without tiresome adherence to a given date, we must study unity of plan, and banish all really discordant elements. For instance, a room furnished noticeably in the Georgian style should not contain obtrusive Victorian manufactures. A very Japanese room should not be marred by early English work, such as would be unlikely to reach Japan. On the other hand, a Georgian room may contain Jacobean furniture; a Jacobean room may take hints from old Japan or Egypt. Any objects of contemporary or earlier date may be deemed to have a possible right in the room, while those of a *later* date cannot have by any stretch of imagination. Similarly, Chinese art would be fish-out-of-water-ish in an early English home. China was not opened up till the sixteenth century, and *modern* Chinese work would be ill-placed in a Jacobean room, as it would dispel the illusion of antiquity, and at once betray that the room was spurious, or that modern additions and excrescences were being added.

Such things might fairly be carried by the present generation into an antique dwelling place, but they would always look 'out of keeping' and uncomfortable. This makes, in my opinion, a room avowedly eclectic easier to manage and more suitable to modern wants than any other. Good taste, which means sensibility and discrimination, will decide what incongruity means, and what principle or system is to govern the arrange-

ment, leaving ; or accidents and after-thoughts, and bearing i nroughout that a room is not an ornament ind of circumstances, but chiefly an accessory and to beings who move and change continually.

It is this fact which endows us with liberty to suit our own r , or the varying tastes of a family, in a room ; and n the meaning of harmony is rightly understood, we see that it means not only a simple, impoverished cadence like a slight air played by one hand, but it admits of complex and even elaborate development. Indeed, you may play with colours, as with notes, so as to satisfy all ears. The key may be in the main major or minor, the tone may be high or low as you wish it, but harmony is vowed neither to simplicity nor exuberance ; either may be harmonious, either discordant. You may attain a harmonious effect by the redundance of elements, such as hangings, furniture, china, pictures, and all ornaments, however many and various ; or you may attain it by the paucity of elements. Nothing but an 'eye' for beauty can arrange either little or much *well*, so as not to weary or satiate. And if you cultivate your eye, you will arrange your own house better than any decorator can do it for you, and you will avoid the badge of a 'Smith house' or a 'Brown house.'

Decorating.

The province of a decorator, commonly forgotten, is not to take your house out of your jurisdiction ; he might as well control all your possessions and sell every-

thing he did not personally cov[illegible] province is to help you in that mechanical par[illegible] you cannot do yourself. He may guide you; h[illegible] not subjugate you. He should be competent to sa[illegible]u from a fiasco if you are utterly incapable of thinki[illegible] or yourself, but he ought surely to harmonise your i[illegible]vidual opinions with the general laws (broad as they [illegible]) of art which he is supposed to have studied, not [illegible]o make your house the replica of another he has d[illegible]ne. A man's house, whilst he is in it, is a part of himself. Such stipulations as professional decorators are apt to make — that, having undertaken to decorate your room, they are to do it in their own way, and not to be 'hampered by your prejudices,'[1] is, I think, a principle *à priori* false, though I can well understand the professional views and reasons. However ignorant the customer, and however accomplished the decorator, the customer's opinions and wishes are of the first importance in this as in every other province of trade, and the 'public' will never improve until they are respected. What should we say if the linen-draper took a leaf out of the decorator's book, and if when we asked for red silk the shopman politely replied, 'Madam, I consider red silk unsuited to you, and I suggest green merino; and if your prejudices are opposed to the laws of art, represented by the present fashion and my stock, I prefer to decline your order'? We should resent this, though a dress does not last so long as a new wall-colour, it can be got rid of sooner. There are certain patterns, as there are certain colours, repugnant, like particular ailments, to certain constitu-

[1] Such strenuous conditions are laid down in (e.g.) *House Decoration* (Art at Home Series).

tions; and, although constant interference by customers in the progress of the work would be very vexatious to any workman, yet he has no right to object to any alteration demanded—to any exchange, e.g., of a stiff for a flowing pattern, or a bright colour for a dull one, when, the work finished, it is displeasing to those who have got to endure it for years.

The customer ought to meet a tyrannical decorator with Shylock's dignified answer, 'It is my humour,' and the detail of colour or device which the decorator wants to put up, whether you like it or no, may be regarded as the 'harmless necessary cat' which every freeborn Briton has a right to hate if he will, as Shylock hints.

What a Room should be.

To obtain a harmonious whole, you must not omit the main element—yourself; and the premiss that your 'prejudices' are not to count only fosters the ape-like propensity, already common, which we ought to try to get rid of. We do not want any new recipe for creating apes, we have too many. One is the decorator's 'prejudice' when his stock-in-trade is limited. Beautiful in itself, and satisfying the cultured eye in all its parts, the dwelling-room ought to offer relief and sympathy in colour and shape to all moods, all types. The domestic surroundings, like dress, have a definite effect on the spirits, almost on the character; they may be sympathetic or irritating. Note their importance in a sick room, for example, which any observant nurse will confirm. A well-coloured room is cheerful, yet not

obtrusively gay, calm without depressing the spirits, soft or rich in tone without partaking too much of either cold or hot tints; and offering no broad blank spaces to fatigue the mind or exercise it to devise possible additions, nor patterns which teaze the eye to count and follow their impertinent gyrations. It should, in fact, be like a calm, pleasant expectant smile on a kindly face,—not a sour stare, nor an obstreperous loud laugh.

CHAPTER III.

Old Queen Anne Style.

IF the gaudy red and gold monstrosities of twenty years ago (Louis XV. fashions vulgarised) may be likened to the obstreperous loud laugh, some of the would-be-æsthetic modern rooms, all splinters and ashen tints (George III. modes vulgarised) may be likened to the sour stare. Grim and acidulated in colouring, cold and formal in aspect, dotted with heavy high chairs falsely fathered upon Chippendale and falsely modelled on Greek forms, and rickety little tables and sofas glossy and spotty with inlaying almost like a snake's skin, and made with sharp legs which seem to prick and sting the carpet—we find no large conceptions of beauty or pleasantness either in the true George III. room nor its copy. Why are these things called 'Queen Anne' unless in jest because she never lived to see such furniture?

The art which was popular here in that quiet queen's day was chiefly Jacobean, for foreign fashions did not cross the silver streak as swiftly as they now do; and

that was of a heavy, large, but right noble type. The woodwork was capital. The chairs were heavy, square, velvet-covered, with twisted or slowly curved legs, which will bear any superimposed weight. The well-seasoned oak or chestnut-wood has the hardness and polish of

FIG. 2.—Seventeenth Century Cabinet, belonging to the Rev. H. R. Haweis.

bronze. The vast bedsteads, chairs and cabinets, intelligently carven by hand (you could not overturn *them* with your skirts)—which were in keeping with the massive dress of Anne's day—stood against oaken panelling which for simple propriety of treatment, admirable construction, and cleanliness, is unparalleled. There is no such work now. The joints which were meant to bear the rough

polishing with beeswax and vinegar of strong-armed, old-fashioned housemaids, have borne the rougher usage of neglect and defacement for 150 years, and still harbour no parasites between the well-seasoned seams.

Meantime increasing social wealth, security, and comfort were annually rendering *strength* in furniture less important, and *effect* was more generally sought. The odour of the Renascence had not quite faded. Under Louis XIV. and his successor in France the luxuries of Imperial Rome seemed more enviable as they were better understood; the passion for novelty and surprises inspired all that was best and worst in the fashions of the time; and the décadence of taste moved on through a few beautiful phases. The black oak with its splendid honest lights and shadows had long yielded to the rich *marqueterie* made gay with chased brass and ormolu, which was peculiarly French both in its artificiality and the cleverness of its delicate finish. Her Majesty the Queen possesses specimens of this work contemporary with Anne, but it was no more English than the Florentine mosaics which were made in the sixteenth century, and it ought to be called Louis XIV. What *was* English, perhaps the only fashion which may be correctly called after Queen Anne,[1] was the new invention, grained paint.

There are many rooms and doorways of true Jacobean and Annean work in Gray's Inn Square and that district, which would be worth preserving in some more

[1] Grained paint was known to the ancient Romans, but this unpleasing classic fashion appears not to have been popular in England until Queen Anne's time.

fashionable locality, and windows adorned with the wreaths and architectural ornaments of Renascence origin, giving on avenues of trees planted in lordly rows according to the good old English taste. The ornaments were grained over, whatever they were made of. Paper for wall-hangings was already in use, humbly emulating the designs of the old leather and silk which had long adorned richer walls, but its quality was not yet satisfactory enough to commend it to popular taste. Paper-hangings are essentially English—even Jacquemart admits that. France received the manufacture from us, and presently added improvements; England may have derived it from Holland or Spain, where stamped paper-hangings are said to have been first made about 1555. Stencilling and whitewash were still extensively used, as they had been for centuries, whilst princes and the wealthier citizens moved to and fro against a background of Flemish or English tapestry, or silk, velvet, and gilt leather, in carved panels of oak, and overhung with pictures and mirrors. The finer French 'Gobelin' tapestry, applied to walls, screens, and chairs of refined and easy form, was the rage in France, where luxury reached its height under Louis XV., and meek England followed France as closely as she dared.

The rooms, therefore, which the wealthy inhabited during Anne's brief reign and for some time before and after, were by no means cold or bare in tone. They were brilliant, either with the superb colouring and gold of Spanish leather or Flemish looms, or with the sombre lustre of polished and carven wood. Pepys speaks of 'hanging the long chamber where the girl lies with the

sad stuff that was in the best chamber, in order to the hanging that with tapestry,' only a few years before Queen Anne reigned, which proves that various stuffs were in use for that purpose; and Evelyn about the same time tells us of Lady Mordaunt's room at Ashstead 'hung with pintado full of figures great and small prettily representing sundry trades and occupations of the Indians, with their habits,'—of rooms 'parqetted with yew' which he 'liked well,' and of wainscots and chimney-pieces carved by Gibbons; of Persian carpets, of Mr. Bohun at Lee, who had Japan screens instead of wainscot (a little later Paris went mad after Japan lacquer, till Martin devised a mode of imitating it), and of the new French tapestry 'for design, tenderness of work and incomparable imitation of the best paintings, beyond anything I ever beheld.'

In such rooms, 'exceedingly glorious and pretty to look at,' the Queen Anne beauties moved and crackled about, in rich brocades, and buckram, and marvellous low bodices, and played at being Romans or rustics in equal magnificence.

Grinling Gibbons.

We cannot go farther without a few words on the quality of the carving which distinguished Anne's and her father's reign, and on the genius of the first Englishman who founded a school of art in his native land. Of his life we know little, of his character nothing, save what Evelyn tells us: he was 'musical, and very civil, sober and discreete in his discourse.'

But his work indicates a conscientiousness, a firmness and facility, a grace of fancy, and a sympathetic understanding of bird, beast, and flower, which may well reflect the habit of mind which brought it forth, and it is sufficient to stand in the beautifully re-decorated Chapel of Trinity College, Cambridge, where the Gibbons'-carvings long unnoticed now stand forth from a golden ground, to be struck with an almost passionate admiration of the dainty groups, as Evelyn himself was. Like all truly great work, it stands outside criticism. We forget whilst looking at it that the canons of art repudiate naturalistic decoration, and that a frieze of undying flowers is rather astonishing, and that lilies-of-the-valley, carnations, and blue-bells are not alike dark brown, as Gibbons' contemporaries forgot that such wreaths were rather Gothic than classic, when they laid them round Wren's pillars. The fragile stalks and tremulous leaves engross our minds, the wood is alive, and Gibbons remains independent of cavillers and canons.

In Trinity Library, similar work in pale pear-wood, standing forth in bold bouquets nigh a foot from the background, is even more marvellous, and we have the curious opportunity of comparing, in the case of one decayed bouquet, first-rate modern work with Gibbons' own. An eminent English carver who has revived in the present day some interest in wood-carving, undertook to copy exactly the decayed bouquet; and this he did in somewhat boastful spirit, insisting when he sent it in that his own was superior to the master's. But vast is the gulf between them. Gibbons' leaves are thin as

paper, his stalks as delicately finished behind as before, a third the density of the copy: his curves are more subtle, his poise of dainty twigs more nice and wondrous; the comparison is most interesting and instructive.

Gibbons' finest work is at Chatsworth, where certain nets of game seem to represent the dying struggles of soft-plumaged birds with startling truth, a miracle of carving; and in St. Paul's Cathedral, in St. James's, Westminster, the South Kensington Museum, and other places, there are fine examples of Gibbons' skill. But who ever goes to see them? They hang enveloped in the gloomy atmosphere of unlovely London, killed by the dull colouring of grained painting and senseless dirty Renascence scrolls and borders; they are to all intents and purposes lost.

The wondrous skill of the young artist, of whom Evelyn's description is well known, working in his humble studio 'neere Sayes Court,' commanded a good price, happily, while he yet lived, to say nothing of the munificent retaining fee, or pension, of 1*s.* 6*d.* a day from George I., which Gibbons enjoyed during the last seven years of his life. What was more, it created a school of ingenious imitators, one of whom, Watson, who worked under Gibbons at Chatsworth, was but slightly inferior to the master; hence the conscientious hand-work in mouldings, Corinthian capitals, rich door-frames, pediments, mantel-pieces, and furniture, which renders Georgian houses interesting, was directly inspired by Gibbons and the finer taste of Stuart times. Gibbons died in 1721: but it is probable that latterly he rather supervised than executed his world-famed wreaths. His best work was

done in Charles II.'s reign, when he was associated with Wren, like a delicate bindweed around an oak.

To return to the ordinary furniture of James II. and Anne.

Queen Anne Walls.

Among the humbler gentry who could not afford the rich carvings and French *marqueterie*, the wainscoted rooms, whether whitewashed or no, were Jacobean in their furniture: but papers of a thin poor kind, intended, as I have said, to imitate the punched leather and stamped velvet in their spotty, rather patchy patterns, covered the walls of the less carefully built apartments. Flock paper was supposed to represent velvet rather successfully. The woodwork, when carving like Gibbons' was not accessible, was sliced at the edges into slight arches and angles, sometimes pretty in form, but hardly pretending to *art* in their rude simplicity of design and execution, save in the moderation of the curve, and the graining began to creep into every available place with its base and facile tricks—even real oak was smothered under its more fashionable semblance, as false flowers later were thought more stately than real ones. Stucco began to simulate wood reliefs wherever it was possible. It had been largely used for ceilings, and for ornamenting caskets, &c., all through the Reformation times; now it covered pilasters, door-panels, mantel-shelves, &c., still retaining the beautiful designs derived from classic art and modified by sixteenth century genius; but no doubt losing spirit and grace. The windows were still often latticed, and the

walls remained thick enough to form deep window-seats and doorways; but the newer furniture was far smaller and weaker than what was made in the previous century, and inlaid pieces, mounted in brass, began to be sought as the new French fashion. Their mechanical excellence covered a multitude of sins.

Not that the application of brass and ormolu to furniture, nor inlaying with coloured woods, was peculiar to Queen Anne's time, nor even indicative of it, for nothing was peculiar to it but the grained paint. In the fifteenth century the Italian 'intarsiatori' caught from ancient stone mosaics the idea of mosaic in woods. Inlaying was not rare in the sixteenth century, and in the curious Spanish piece combining organ and cabinet which stands in the South Kensington Museum among the old musical instruments, we may judge how perfect the manufacture had become as early as 1560. There we see *marqueterie* so skilful that it does not try (nor even attract) the eye at a few paces' distance. Curious markings of the natural wood seem to break up the plain surface, and these streaks and spots fall into designs of ruined temples, scrolls, and birds with surprising effect only when you are quite close to them. But all through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries wood inlayings, with more and more vulgar and attractive patterns, were common in France, and in the later eighteenth century began to creep across the Channel into the houses of the English middle classes, only because the condition of the classes improved, and a larger number of people were able to buy tables and cabinets. The finest *marqueterie* collected by Anna-

maniacs belongs to the Louis Seize period, and is signed with foreign names. Chippendale copied it.

Brass and ormolu scroll-edges attached to all parts of furniture, came into vogue in France and Italy about temp. Louis XIV. The designs lasted into Anne's reign as they have lasted into Victoria's. But this kind of elaborate furniture was too costly to become common for a long time, about the middle of the eighteenth century, when the designs were already deteriorating, and they can never properly be said to belong to English as much as to French art. I shall show later how the excessively ornate style grew out of the homelier by the natural process of increasing luxury and skill, and what the décadence under the 'Grand Monarque' became through gradual vitiation of the eye.

What people now call 'Queen Anne' fashions with a charming indifference to the trammels of dates, are the fashions of the three Georges, Marie Antoinette (under that queen French furniture and decoration whilst still sumptuous became refined and moderate), and especially everything which came in during the Empire (Napoleon I.). Now as Anne died in 1714 and Napoleon resigned his crown in 1815, there are just 100 years of perhaps the most remarkable changes and developments in domestic sentiments, and hence art, which ever occurred in a century, all named after Anne, whose tastes, strictly speaking, belonged to her father's generation. If people would but let poor Anne rest in her grave! The confusion her ghost has created is ludicrous. Only the other day I was shown a French mirror (Louis XIV.) by some really cultivated folks as 'Queen Anne—"Empire," you know—genuine Chippendale!'

Chippendale.

Chippendale the elder was a cabinet-maker who flourished about the middle of the last century, long after Anne's reign. He was no creator, like Boule, but he was a capital workman. His joiner's work was excellent, his use of glue and veneer properly small. He was the author of many of the most elaborate Louis XV. patterns in England: frames, tables, commodes, pedestals, all of them ingenious, all of them adapted from the French, and contradicting all sense of purpose in frames, tables, commodes and pedestals: not a straight line anywhere, not a moment's rest for the eye, all wriggling curves like bewitched vegetation, giving birth in unexpected places to human heads, beasts and birds. Nothing so like a bad dream ever caught the fretful and sickly popular fancy. His books of designs were published between 1752 and 1762.

He also adapted his workshop to the prevailing taste when it turned pseudo-Greek, Dutch, and pseudo-Chinese, and manufactured many good, and as many base and bad, articles of furniture. His meretricious simulations of bronze stands, (in wood, the impossible curves strengthened by internal wires,) were turned out among his bureaux and chairs, really well and durably constructed, with mere servility to the customer's purse, not with any artistic independence of principle. Chippendale was a clever tradesman; he is overrated by blind enthusiasts till one almost fancies he was a shopkeeping divinity. We hear twice as much of him as we do of

Gibbons, who was an artist, not a carpenter. But he would have been thought nothing of in a country of real artistic discrimination like France and Italy.

Furniture and dress naturally echo each other in fashion. And we cannot too firmly assert (for the benefit of accurate minds) that as the Renascence waned, the new fashions in England aimed at novelty and surprise as did contemporary modes in France, without the inspiration which centred in the reign of Louis XIV., or the skill and fancy which ran riot under Louis XV. Those new fashions which were not again directly classic, were striking, 'loud,' even garish. When the leather hangings were torn and tarnished, they came to be replaced by papers of stronger and stronger patterns, with no great improvement in quality. In many old Georgian houses we can study the flaunting peacocks and impossible flowers which disported themselves alike on walls and hoop-wide sacques. There is an interesting specimen of this wall-paper at Ashley Park, against which the dim, faded old Georgian *marqueterie* disappears. For the birds and scrolls on the *marqueterie* are small and by comparison quiet in tint. Those on the walls are life size—poorly coloured, ill drawn, garish and vulgar, but 'Queen Anne.'

Queen Anne Costumes.

The ephemeral 'rages' for certain periods and styles to which the fashionable world has ever been subject may be variously accounted for. Often they seem to be born of air, and changed by a breath with no tangible

raison d'être. The present rage for 'Queen Anne' objects of every description is exceedingly odd—the looseness with which people use the term is more so.

As plate earlier than Anne became scarce, it was natural enough for 'silvermaniacs' to take refuge in Queen Anne spoons and saltcellars, and from this the step to contemporary tables and chairs was easily made, and the transition from these in the costumes in harmony with them would seem equally simple; but in all this the artistic gain is more than doubtful.

The vague space of time now bearing Anne's name—as a rule, much longer and much later than her life, for it certainly stretches from one end of the eighteenth century to the other—was marked by an absence of the artistic feeling so complete and so conscious, that scarcely any attempt was made to vary the few inoffensive forms which satisfied the public. Straight lines, the skeleton of the classicism of the seventeenth century, were so prevalent that Hogarth protested by cutting on his palette 'the line of beauty'—a curve. All was formal, stiff, and, on the whole, ugly.

When people say 'Anne' they generally mean 'George,' which is hard on Anne, who, coming to the throne late in life, and adorning it but briefly, ought fairly, if she claims anything, to claim the entire period from, say, her marriage in 1683 (two years before Charles II. died), to her own death in 1714; a period less blank and hopeless in beauty than that immediately succeeding, which was ruled by the two first kings of the House of Hanover. Anne was the last of the Stuart dynasty, and, by reason both of the brevity of her sway and her own

unostentatious disposition, never had sovereign less influence upon the æsthetic tendencies of her age.

In dress, in furniture, in plate, in architecture, in nearly every department of art, though all pseudo-classic, Charles II.'s time stands high. The period which may be said to have begun with George III., boasting some reforms in dress, Chippendale's goods, and Sir Joshua Reynolds, had also much to please an artist's eye. The period between the two involved a reaction against the corrupt luxury of the court, and made itself felt as to furniture, in straight lines and discomfort—the fashions imported from Holland; as to dress, in whalebone, buckram, and unwieldiness, a direct contradiction to the beauteous *laisser aller* which had outrun itself shortly before. Perhaps the fashionable falsities were a sort of protest against too much candour. How artistically hideous the reaction was, a very little thought makes clear. Let us see what the fashions during Anne's life actually were. Born in 1664, Anne may have seen the undulating negligence of satin- and pearl-clad beauties glide about her cradle; may have worn some Lely-fashion herself before her father reigned. At nineteen (when she married) she may have sported the new 'Fontange,' or *commode* ironically so called. She may have rejoiced in a 'paire of lockes and curls' wired out on end. She probably decked her pleasant *freundlich* face with the stars and the black coach and horses which are seen in all their grace and expressiveness in engravings of the period. This is the more likely, as the mass of patches was no new fashion in 1683, but had been thirty years in vogue already, and was still the scorn of sati-

rists. Bulwer in his 'Artificial Changeling,' 1650, first alludes to this. 'It is well,' he says, 'if one black patch will serve to make their faces remarkable, for some fill their visages full of them, varied into all manner of shapes and figures;' some of which I have illustrated in 'The Art of Beauty' (figs. 63 and 80); while the author of 'God's Voice against Pride and Apparel,' in 1683 (the year of Anne's marriage), declares that the black patches remind him of plague spots, 'and methinks the mourning coach and horses all in black, and plying on their foreheads, stands ready harnessed to whirl them to Acheron.' Anne probably squeezed her waist into a V form (as in fig. 3), and walked out in the clumsy garb buried in furbelows which we may admire in many old prints, or even sported the masculine coat, waistcoat and walking-cane held about 1700 to be the 'height of taste,' and slung at her side a light rapier, and tucked her cocked hat under her arm, like other ladies.

FIG. 3.—From an old wood-cut, circa 1690.

At any rate, these were the vagaries of fashion in Anne's youth. At its quietest, the costume of ordinary mortals was terribly stiff, heavy, and inconvenient; not to say unclean, considering the mass of powder scattered in the air by the men's periwigs alone. Anne's retiring

nature and complete subservience to the Duchess of Marlborough, who was too much given to the state intrigue to trouble herself with costume, may have inclined her personally to the least obtrusive forms then fashionable; but it must also have led her not to disregard the 'mode.'

To those who, possessing early eighteenth century furniture, are properly desirous of dressing in harmony with it, I may suggest the kind of attire belonging to their favourite period, by quoting advertisements of losses in the reign of Anne. Here is one: 'A black silk petticoat, with a red and white calico border; cherry-coloured stays, trimmed with blue and silver; a red and dove-coloured damask gown, flowered with large trees; a yellow satin apron trimmed with white Persian, and muslin head cloths with crowsfoot edging; double ruffles with fine edging, a black silk furbelowed scarf, and spotted hood.' (From the 'Post Boy,' November 15, 1709.)

Here is another costume, advertised for in 1712: 'A green silk knit waistcoat, with gold and silver flowers all over it, and about fourteen yards of gold and silver thick lace on it' (no mean quantum for one waistcoat!), 'and a petticoat of rich strong flowered satin, red and white, all in great flowers or leaves, and scarlet flowers with black specks brocaded in, raised high like velvet or shag.'

If the result is somewhat vulgar in its tasteless display of inappropriate colours and immoderate ornaments, it will not be my fault but the fault of Queen Anne. Thus and thus Queen Anne was robed, and

the men were as many-coloured and as refulgent as the ladies.

The chief feature, however, of woman's dress, during the whole space of Anne's life, was the singular indelicacy, which may be studied in the pictures and the satires contemporaneous by those who wish to copy the costume. Scarlet shag flowers and scores of yards of gold braid will be powerless to revive the times of Anne without this feature. The whole bust must be unflinchingly exposed as it was when Richard Buxton published his book, 'A just and seasonable Reprehension,' and when another divine prayed, 'Lord, hast Thou any mantoes for ladies, made after Thine own fashion, which shall cover all their naked shoulders, and breasts, and necks, and adorn them all over?—where are they?' Anne lived through two periods of the *commode*, that terrific edifice of gummed lace shooting up from the head crestwise, of which Addison, in the character of the 'Spectator,' wrote in the year 1711: 'I remember several ladies that were very near seven feet high that at present want some inches of five;' and which sprouted shortly after higher than ever, like lopped trees that gain new vigour to sprout by lopping. And this Queen presided over the introduction of the great hoop petticoat which Hogarth a little later caricatured or did not caricature (see page 157); as also that ugly modern patten with a ring beneath the sole, so much the reverse of an improvement upon the ancient clog. She died in 1714.

The head-dresses then worn were, for the most part, almost as large as could be grappled with by the strength of the spine. The wigs of the men floated to

the waist, and were so powdered that their coats were 'as white as a miller's, their faces besmeared with snuff.' The ladies wore cushions and powder as well as large disfiguring patches, surmounted by heavy caps, with broad lappets spread over the shoulders and formally pinned in place.

CHAPTER IV.

New Queen Anne Style.

THOSE sated and out of patience with ornament, whether mismanaged or simply superabundant, have been known to fly to simplicity and plain surfaces for repose. Owen Jones so sought refuge from a jaded appetite for colour and form. A fashion for plainness and simplicity in decoration is convenient in more ways than one. It is convenient to the new-made *virtuoso*, who likes it because it may imply that he could have done the contrary if he had chosen; convenient to those born without taste, for it saves them fiascos; convenient to the impecunious, for it saves them money; convenient to decorators who have crept into notice by good luck, not merit, like the clever doctor in Grimm's fairy tale, for it saves them trouble.

Hence the running popularity of the so-called 'Queen Anne' furniture and scheme of decoration, now provided by every upholsterer.

But alas! it is possible to be sated with simplicity, not to say discomfort. Already we are beginning to

rebel against the plain square patch of wall painted grey, or drab, or some of those nameless earth-tints which the 'æsthetic' are vowed to. We know that the key-note of all these 'Queen Anne' rooms is quiet and mortally 'severe.' The chairs are few, hard, square and heavy, and covered with dingy velvets laboriously made to look poor and imperfect in web and recalling in colour mud—mildew—ironmould—nothing clean or healthy. We know that there is not to be a low or easy chair in any room. We know that the windows must be small, with poor little oblong panes, because windows bore a tax during the whole eighteenth century. We know we must expect only small bevelled mirrors in mean little frames—or convex ones which make our faces seem bloated with toothache or hollow with atrophy—our figures spent and wasted, as with a sore disease. All this we know—the papers on the walls, the colours in the carpet. The 'inescapable' blue china, the one or two autotypes, photographs, or etchings alone permitted us; the bare, comfortless bed-room furniture; the austere dining-room furniture—the whole *faronche* protest against 'shaped' and blazoned vulgarity; we know it is æsthetic, and let us be æsthetic or we are nothing.

But is it pleasurable? is it beautiful? is it 'becoming'?

Colourless Liveries.

All these fashionable rooms resemble each other. The Queen-Anne-mad decorators (some conspicuously) have but one idea and drive it to death. One hears

that Mr. Brown or the Misses Smith have decorated So and So's house. We know without ever entering it what that house is like. That house is a bore. There is not one original thought in it, from its inconvenient entrance to its last dark and æsthetic cranny. We know every chair, every tint, every stencil, every brass knob, every bit of carefully discoloured and fatiguingly broidered napery—every wretched hard 'Sheraton' sofa and skewer-legged table—almost every orthodox work of art on those deadly-lively walls. For the most part, these houses reflect no inmate's character, no natural need and requirement—they contain no thought, no sweet little surprise—no touch of genius, nor even of ability.

Yet they are 'æsthetic.' Much labour and lucre are spent on making them so, and the inhabitants are duly 'worked up' to their walls, with a garb and a language of their own. After all, what does æsthetic mean? I once met an æsthetic artist who abhorred sunlight—he said it was 'crude.' So he only painted for two hours a day, after sunset. If æsthetic means 'discriminating,' we only see that the æsthetic discriminate between vulgar comfort and select misery: if it means 'eccentric,' popularity is surely bringing the seeds of death! unless the eccentricity be of speech, and then we bow, baffled, before the 'inescapable and lordly' 'niceness,' which results in 'distinctly inevitable' obscurity. A recent writer in the 'Contemporary Review' explained with some humour the condensed farfetchedness which in China constitutes 'good literary style,' but he did not say whether the æsthetic practice of obscure speech is traceable to æsthetic worship of Nankeen pots and plates.

But though our unregenerate hearts may sigh for relief and something neither blue-green nor green-blue, we must not be unjust. These rooms are so convenient, after all! They are less offensive than the old red and gold business. You can move easily among the sparse urniture. The little joints and inlaid spots are very 'nice' and the little emasculated legs vibrate sympathetically at a touch, so slight are they—poor little naked,

FIG. 4.—New Queen Anne table.

shivering things! There is something weakly and feminine about this style, which goes to the heart, surely. Yet the inoffensiveness, unwarmed by some character, some *chic*, is in itself sometimes an offence. The heart sinks a little as the eye ranges from right to left vainly seeking something which does not weary it, but the monotony is too oppressive and it lights at length upon some natural object, some shrub or flower which Queen

Anne has not tampered with in its artless, obstinately characteristic growth and colour.

Nature's Protest.

Nature is unmoved by our crazes and our fashions. Nature only has courage to be herself, to assert her own individuality, to follow her own way, and never to be a bore, in spite of dynasties. The cactus or azalea which clothes the hillsides of Turkey or Algiers with pink or scarlet flame, the rose-garden in our own England, the golden common alight with furze in bloom, the apple-orchard and the buttercup-field, rebuke us for our folly. Colour and light and sunshine and shadow, all were made for our pleasure, and the dull lines of decay, suitable in their place, ought not to be our main surroundings. Dirt may be valuable to depress some forced or unnatural effect: but dirt is *not* the only thing that is 'nice.' Colour is not in itself objectionable, but only our ignorant use of it. Let us not give up wholesome brightness nor wholesome pleasure, even under Roundhead rule: for (as we earlier showed) when the natural balance is destroyed mischief ensues.

Let us press not only shadow but sunshine—not only straight lines but curves—not only sympathies but contrasts, into our service where we want them: and be charged with no burdens of 'oughts' and 'musts' which Nature herself contradicts.

Second Book

A Retrospect of Rooms

CHAPTER I.

Early English Furniture.

WHAT does the upholsterer mean by 'Early English'? He sticks it into every advertisement; he attaches it to all objects, bookcases, coalscuttles, lace, and duplex lamps; to all periods, but especially the decade and a half ruled over by Queen Anne, and that other decade and a half, a century later, governed by Napoleon I. Modern oak settles, carved by machinery; mahogany and other chairs made about 1835; everything that looks ecclesiastical; and all ugly colours—are now called 'Early English.' For instance, a ladder chair for library use, plain oak, is called 'superior'; the same thing defaced by a bit of machine 'carving,' of course unpainted, but heavily varnished, becomes 'Early English,' though in old England paint was everywhere and varnish not invented; a wall painted with an even tint of mud-colour—anything coloured dirty grey or drab—is therefore 'Early English;' and as upholsterers, not content with this abuse of terms, are now sending out advertisements

stuffed with antiquarian lore worthy of *Punch*, let us examine the four or five distinct periods of English history in which domestic art took a definite form, and not gibber about superior fourteenth century table forks and twelfth century point lace—which I have actually seen advertised.

The 'Early English' period is, or was, supposed properly to cover Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman times in this country. On the question of furniture we can hardly divide the two. The Mediæval period may be placed about 1200–1500; the Renascence, 1500–1600, though the loudness of its echo did not fail for fully a hundred years more. The Modern time must be defined as extending from 1700 to 1880, but for clearness' sake we will make a distinction between the Modern time (say up to 1850) and the present day.

The Meaning of Furniture.

In its natural and general sense, furniture (*Fr. mobilier*) means movables—property easily transported from place to place, as distinguished from a house and lands. On the habits and wants of a class depend the quantity and quality of the furniture; hence the folly of making up ideal objects and christening them after certain periods, without some knowledge of what was then invented.

It has been pointed out that the first articles which began to furnish and make home-like the stronghold of the settler were hutches or chests to contain small goods —clothes, money, linen, or whatever stores he possessed

—or convey them in case of flight or removal, for in primeval times there were neither shops nor banks, nor Pickford's vans. Such chests, being precious and durable, must have received decoration from very early times—in the very dawn of civilisation. In England chests with painted scenes on a gold ground date from about the eleventh century. Leathern chests bound with iron hasps, and painted, also have a remote pedigree. In the twelfth century we seem to perceive a greater regard for elegance of form: wood turned by the lathe came into use, and the chests came to be distinguished by special names according to their size and function, as *bahut*, hutch (with varieties huceau, hucheau, huchel, *arche*, and buffet), bouge, coffer, coffret. The technical sense in which we speak of 'a rabbit hutch' and the 'Coffers of the State,' the 'Military Chest,' and the 'Chest at Chatham,' is a curious relic of the old habit of guarding valuables of all kinds.

The first requisite in ancient furniture was strength. Therefore the joints, hinges, and locks were made powerful enough to resist attacks, and with increasing skill in attack came increasing ingenuity in defence. How a lock can develop under the double pressure of necessity and the artistic sense we may see in such a museum as that of the late M. Boucher de Perthes at Abbeville.

How beauty waited on utility, and was inseparable from it, in old English work of any importance (as good art always is), nearly every museum of antiquities and every old cathedral can prove. The delicacy of the free-hand carving, the variety in ideas and in treatment, and the real mechanical excellence, are often wondrous,

and a grave reproach to our own unconscientious workmen.

The mighty, well-seasoned oak safe, carved by the rude Leightons and Wattses of early England in designs which seemed to add new strength, not to weaken the tough fibre, is still admirable, still worthy. The carved geometric patterns, even when not supplemented by complicated iron mounts, represented bars crossed and re-crossed to redouble force. The mailed knights in Gothic arches, which we often see carved around old hutches, seemed to form a doughty outer barricade, and not adornment only. Such a choice of ornaments has been shown by Owen Jones to be the result, perhaps unconscious, of a fine sense of propriety in every race, however savage, which possesses any art at all. The paddles of the Tahiti or New Zealand islander, and the doorposts of his hut, are as eminent an example of natural good taste as many works of advanced civilisation.

As public security increased, people amassed more possessions, and cared more for them. Like dress, furniture is a kind of progressive chronicle; the art applied to it blossomed out with every pause, following each step onward. After tools and weapons, the hutch, bedstead, bench, and *chair* (a backed bench accommodating several persons—the 'quality'—hence an old church 'pew,' pulpit, professor's chair, and domestic seat) were the first decorated objects in furniture. The walls, the dais, last of all the ceiling, were next furnished with decoration, which could be speedily supplied or removed, such as tapestry, canopies, and mats under the feet.

and this decoration took very much the place of our literature, and our pictures. Asgrim is described in the 'Njalssaga' as ordering the board to be arranged and the tapestries hung up when he sees Flosi and his band approaching, to whom he chooses to be hospitable.

Along with the walls, in 'places of worship' held secure, such as the House of God and the house of a great lord, the windows were decorated as a matter of course, being part of the wall. Songs of love, legends of piety, lessons of wisdom, told with the wholesome *naïveté* of a child, spoke to the heart from every available surface throughout the fresh, eager morning of art.

A Fourteenth-Century Room.

They loved colour, the English people, though they were not particular about having it quite clean—which is no doubt an acquired taste; 'l'appétit vient en mangeant.' In the fourteenth century a good deal of luxury was common in 'worthy' houses. Christine of Pisa has sung the splendours of royal residences: 'les aornemens des sales, chambres d'étranges et riches bordeures à grosses perles d'or et soye à ouvrages divers: le vaisellement d'or et d'argent, et autres nobles estoremens, n'était se merveilles non.' The cupboard, once as simple as the table, a plank on trestles, had become stationary, and sprouted more shelves, carven and painted in the rich Gothic tracery to harmonise with the gay colours of the hangings and dresses. Etiquette began to order the chamber and 'al thynge cleanlye aboute' it—this meant further art-development. 'Cupboord

cloth, with basyn, ewer, candle light, and towell,' dishes of pewter or silver (there was no china), cups, and knives —these were the minor furniture which the artists made beautiful whenever they had the chance: in fact, all these things glowed and breathed with such pleasant thoughts and histories as *we* frame in pictures and suspend on walls, and improved furniture was accompanied by mended manners. The bed, in Edward III's time, had become 'bien et richement encourtiné,' surrounded by gold-bright carpets 'sur quoy on marchait' —fabulous luxury!—at least on those occasions of festive ostentation when ladies of position 'received,' after the birth of a child. 'Et Dieu sçet les autres superfluz despens des festes, baigneries, de diverses assemblées, selon les usaiges de Paris à accouchées,' says Christine; and this gives us some notion of the advance in comfort, if not culture, among the upper classes when leisure and safety waited on their passionate love of carving and colour, on which society was as dependent for ideas and pleasure then as it now is on books. Hence the richness of subjects in old work, the allusive pictures in which ideas were condensed almost confusingly at times, because they delighted every class of a non-reading public.

The dais, then, furnished with 'a chayere' or bench of honour to accommodate the most important person or persons present, was the main feature of a mediæval room. All the household glory centred on the dais. The best hangings were hung above and behind it, precisely like Her Majesty's throne. Below, benches accommodated the *meinie*, both strangers and household

If a carpet adorned the dais, the rest of the room was strewed with straw. The benches were cushioned when necessary; and when the 'board,' furnished only with the cloth, the precious salteellar, and the 'sotelté' at each course: and the 'side-board,' and perhaps the 'credence' for the taster rich with lace-like carving, were set, all the furniture of the time deemed necessary to luxury is enumerated. A gay, rude scene it was, with Oriental broideries bought from passing chapmen, frescoes, and tapestries home-made with loving skill, dazzling plate, and jewel-laden garments, all a little tarnished by the need of constant vigilance

> Se aucune chose y verras
> Que soit deshonete ou vilaine,

Dirty indeed, if not malodorous! The 'little hounds' growled over the bigger bones thrown beneath the board, the lesser ones, fish bones, &c., being left upon the cloth or removed on the sodden 'trenchers' of hard bread. Tiercehawks brought by guests sat hooded on the perch at one end of the room, and under foot the muffled sounds of horses stamping in the stable beneath bore a fitful accompaniment to the mournful jingle of the minstrel's citole. Dinner over, and the board lifted, the noble company, or such as were neither excited nor stupid from the meal, danced, men and ladies holding each other by the finger, or sang, or one amongst them 'most felyngly speketh of love.' The story of Aucassin and Nicolette is related, with a solemn refrain now and then, like a Gregorian chant; whilst the maidens ply the ceaseless distaff which hinders no jest or tender sigh.

Near the window, blazoned with the story of False Arcyte, hangs a caged 'crow' (raven) twittering to the setting sun, while a young knave pushes past the worsted arras shielding the door, and lowers the candle-beam by its pulley from the carved and painted rafters. Presently the 'storied walls' are lighted only by the flaring torches stuck in brackets and the great yellow candles, and on the table-dormant the chess-boards of malachite and crystal, of gold and ivory, are set for the eager players. This sobers all; it is well if 'check' and 'mate,' spoken by bearded or by rosy lips, lead to no mischief as the night wears on, and the white moon sends a beam through the rich panes across the murky atmosphere.

If this be Early England, how absurd it becomes to name thus objects unknown and made by processes inconceivable to her handicraftsmen, and possessing none of the qualities which make Early English works precious—simplicity and earnestness of idea and execution. Mediæval work is naive like a child's. No doubt, to prefer a child's work to a man's is a matter of opinion. To forge childish work is as ridiculous as it is impossible, but this is what modern traders do when they foist on the obtuse public imitations of ancient work under ancient names.

The Development of Art.

Of course, in inferior houses life was still pretty rough; but, in taking the history of furniture as a chronicle of progress, we naturally turn to the castles of the pioneers of luxury—the rich. About this time the

increased demand of a growing population for furniture is suggested by the sub-divisions in the names of artisans. At first the artist, sculptor, carpenter, were one man; now we hear of carpenters, huchiers or coffer makers, menuisiers or joiners, chessboard-makers, and wheelwrights (Mahier, a wheelwright, made in 1415 a wheeled chair in walnut wood for the Queen Isabeau de Bavière) —all probably distinct from the ymaigier, or regular sculptor, or the portreyour who contributed quaint Gothic paintings to the cathedral porch or niche or the monkish genius who carved or illuminated in his quiet cell for money for the Lord's sake.

Then probably it was the ambition of rich folks to possess the works of specialists like Petrot (1360) and Lucas (1496), the chess-board makers, Mahier the wheelwright, and many more, as we love to have a picture by Birket Foster or Landseer—something to point out to visitors, to chat about if not to worship. We hear of Giuliano da Maiano and his nephew Benedetto, 'sculptors and joiners,' devising novelties, inventing inlaid work and new kinds of *marqueterie*—a development which speaks volumes for the change in social conditions.

It was not until the perils and vicissitudes of feudal conditions were at an end that native talent had a fair chance to perfect itself, wondrously as it had survived discouragement, like a flower uprising in the midst of frost and vicious influences.

There is very little doubt that originally carving was simply used as a foundation for painting; perhaps because the art of painted shading had not yet become as effective in variegated colour as natural shadows cast

by raised figures. As the coloured shadows and intermediate tints were more appreciated, the relief of the carved ornament was certainly heightened, and the details more elaborated. Thus we can understand sculpture being more popular than painting, which could not yet produce so vivid an effect; and we may believe that painted sculpture offered all that roundness and chiaroscuro which flat colouring lacked till almost the period of Albert Durer and Holbein.

CHAPTER II.

Noontide.

THE Renascence substituted the simple force of uncoloured relief for the artificial brilliancy of gold and colour—a taste which we may regard as more refined and chaste if we forget that the Greeks coloured their reliefs as highly as ever did mediæval artists; and the new admiration of bare wood and stone may have been partly owing to the fact that classic wood and stone were found without colour because it had worn off during its long burial.

However that may have been, oak began to give way to woods more delicate in fibre and colour, which were softer to carve, or took a higher polish, or could be contrasted one with another with new elegance of effect. These woods, carved, engraved, inlaid, &c., were the passion of the Renascence, as they had been in imperial Rome, until popular taste tired of the absence of colour in furniture, or more probably felt it as an artistic flaw in the brilliant *ensemble* of gilded walls, ceilings, and begemmed garments.

The varying character of the furniture emanating from Italy, France, Germany, &c., is a subject too large to attempt an exhaustive treatment of here. France, the adjoining country to Italy, was the first to introduce north of the Alps the revival of classic types, and to France may be said generally to belong light and refined composition; to Germany a more redundant and sturdy style; while insular England, always a little tardy in accepting new views, brought the warmest appreciation and earnestness to excuse her delay and her ruder imitations.

Spain, where the Renascence took early root, made good use of her great wealth at first; but, like every other country whither the exotic classicism has been forcibly transplanted, the *décadence* soon set in, in the shape of extravagances of style and ornament even more fantastic than we find in Henri IV. architecture or Elizabethan costume. When Saracenic art began to influence the art of Spain, in the later Renascence, many curious hybrids were produced. We get many pieces of extreme beauty in which the barbaric element has its charm, such as the chestnut-wood coffers and secretaires bound with metal work and inlaid with ivory, this again stained or painted to resemble gems—extremely picturesque and gorgeous, with playful Renascence hints and a more refined excellence of design than the ponderous oak reliefs of England before Mary Tudor's time, painted red and blue.

Gothic and Renascence Work.

Such terms as 'purity of taste,' 'sound perception,' &c., suggest that opinion on art, like digestion, may be modified by habit and culture, and as we know that in art, as in food, 'likes and dislikes' depend on the assimilative power, it is clearly unreasonable to expect everyone to agree. No two people see the same thing quite alike: the lens of the eye itself changes with years, becoming less sensitive to certain colours: certain sides of beauty, as of truth, appeal to certain minds, and the cut-and-dried *credo* we are taught as to schools and rules is therefore sometimes a serious hindrance to our confessed enjoyments as it has been to many new developments of genius. Every code of laws becomes obsolete in time.

It ought to be admitted that taste is free: then none of us would be afraid to be happy, and buds of originality would break the sheath of precedent.

Some persons enjoy nearly all the art of the Renascence, whilst others enjoy very little of it, caring chiefly for the Gothic, and both have just reasons, for the fitness of a school lies less in its theories than in the emotions it is able to wake in the spectator. Inspired works are to be found in all schools; a face or a flower carved or painted with such vital force of emotion that it comes to life as we look at it, high and pathetic thoughts which reach and stir us, even (sometimes) through the most imperfect expression, because the spirit is stronger than the letter.

In the Dresden Gallery, how often we find one man stricken dumb before the Sistine Madonna, and blind to

FIG. 5.—Florentine Figure in terra-cotta, fifteenth century

the Madonna of Holbein, whilst his neighbour sees nought in the eyes of Raphael's Child nor Mother save the stare of peasants, but is startled, awed, choked by the gesture of Holbein's Babe, too young to know that He is blessing men, or to direct his own divine impulses. Who shall say which mind is wise or foolish for being complexioned this way or that? Like a closed chamber, the heart has its resonant note, and taste (which means culture of feeling) should be *educated*, not treated like the 'comprachicots' that Victor Hugo romances about.

I must confess to often enjoying early art more than advanced art when simplicity has given place to self-consciousness; and I prefer Gothic in all stages to pure classic in England, where the classic is always out of its element, whether in architecture or domestic art, whether simple or what is called grotesque. The great names in the Renascence are balanced by many mediæval names, little, if at all, less great, considering the conditions under which they worked—artists whose knowledge of design, nay, of anatomy, seems as complete and *facile* as any to be found in classic or in Renascence art.

In the fourteenth century, when Gothic art had reached its highest development of elastic loveliness, *sympathique*, variable, free, with no laws rigid enough to pinion the artist's individuality, relics still remain in wood and stone and clay to attest the real eminence of the art standard, not only magnificent towers and flower-wreathed arches, but bits of statuary in wood and stone and terra-cotta, such as may be studied in the Cluny (fig. 5 is an instance), wherein the nature treatment is worthy of the later, or even the older, days.

In Italy, when the Renascence cannot be said to have begun, though it was quickening into life, in the fourteenth century, we have the works of Andrea Pisano, Antonio Veniziano, and the Gaddis, in bronze, marble, and fresco, and presently Jacopo della Quercia, Signorelli, Brunelleschi, Dello the furniture maker and decorator, Luca della Robbia, Donatello, the Canozzi, and a multitude of geniuses who dared to apply themselves simultaneously to architecture, sculpture, painting, decorating, and goldsmith's work, and felt it no shame to be able to master more than one branch of art. In England, though she was considerably behind Italy, we have many scarcely remembered names: William of Wykeham directing the building of Windsor Castle, Winchester Cathedral, and New College, Oxford; John of St. Omer, Torregiano, Toto, Trevigi, William the Florentine, foreign settlers teaching many pupils; Torell the goldsmith, who worked in metals, from Queen Eleanor's chased tomb in Westminster Abbey down to bell-founding, and the obscure artist, William Austin, of London, of whom Flaxman, speaking of Richard Beauchamps' monument in St. Mary's Church, Warwick, writes, 'The figures are so natural and graceful, the architecture so rich and delicate, that they are excelled by nothing done in Italy of the same kind at the same time, although Donatello and Ghiberti were living when this tomb was executed, in the year 1439.'

Mutilated fragments of beautiful sculpture, full of feeling and skill, are yet visible in the Lady Chapel of Ely Cathedral in the statuettes carved under the Episcopate of Bishop Gray, 1331 to 1349, by men who

studied in Italy under Guarini the younger. Most delicate tarsia and inlaying like Benedetto da Maiano's, embroidery like Paolo da Verona's, inlaid work for banners like Botticelli's, jewellery like Francia's, before Francia died of amazement at Raphael's greatness (it is said), vindicate the excellence of what were once laughed at as Gothic 'Congestions,' by the arrogant Renascence masters. But when art had attained this point she had nothing more to learn, nothing more to struggle and blunder after; the goal was won, and henceforth Art became a toy rather than a religion, and sought rather to magnify man than a higher thing. In architecture, the Florid Gothic tore fancy to tatters for a brief spell, and now, when skill and appreciation were both ripe for a new object, waifs from the buried old world struck the art-lovers with delight. The grandeur of simplicity (when simplicity is grand) was refreshingly manifest. Thus came the reaction.

It is only when the journey has ceased to be a struggle that we can afford to turn and look back at the road we have traversed, and at the far-off scenery behind. This leisure to rest a little marked the transition from the wild exuberance of Gothic art to the refined vagaries and Pagan self-sufficiency of the Renascence, as of one who quits the open fields for a gorgeous and well-kempt garden. It was as though the morning's work was ended with the morning's freshness, and the playtime of afternoon was at hand.

The playtime began very happily, and full of enthusiasm.

A Tudor Room.

We may say that in Elizabeth's time the decorative arts had reached their apogee. The luxury of great houses was unsurpassed, with porphyry chimneypieces, and silver firedogs designed by Cellini; painted windows from Germany or Flanders, ceilings and cornices a mass of colour and rich carving, the walls alight with Cordovan leather of surpassing magnificence, gold, silver, and colour, or tapestry from Genoa, Fontainebleau, Arras. The tables were loaded with Venetian glass, Limoges enamels, and fine linen; the cupboard[1] with superb plate, and bronze as beautiful; then there were the boldly coloured earthenware of Italy, and embroideries on every chair and bench, whether of filigree carving or gauffered delicate leather—embroideries designed by artists of calibre such as Giuliano d'Agnolo, Vasari, Giulio Romano, and worked amid the leisurely concentration of convents.

An anonymous author quoted by Mr. Waring wrote to Catherine de' Medici in 1587 anent the excessive magnificence of luxury: 'It is only about thirty or forty years ago that this excessive and splendid manner of building has come into France; till then our fathers were content with a good compact house, a 'pavilion' or a round tower, a lower court for domestic purposes, and other rooms necessary to lodge themselves and their families, without making superb buildings, great

[1] This word is used for the *buffet*, or side-table, even by Evelyn, when speaking of Charles II.'s dining hall.

masses of houses, pavilions, courts, back-courts, yards, galleries, halls, porticoes, staircases, and other things. They did not think so much of the geometrical proportions and architecture of the exterior, which in many buildings has destroyed internal convenience. . . . In short, they knew nothing of these antique fashions in architecture, which cause so much money to be spent, and which most frequently, in order to make a fine outside, render the interior ugly. They did not know what it was to have marble or porphyry for their chimney-pieces nor at the doors of their houses, nor to gild ridges, girders, and joists. They did not make fine galleries adorned with paintings and rich pictures; they did not spend such sums as they do now in the purchase of one painting, nor buy so much precious and costly furniture to fit up the house. . . .' Iachimo, in 'Cymbeline,' alludes to the splendid firedogs or andirons:

> Her andirons
> (I had forgot them) were two winking Cupids
> Of silver—

as elaborate as sixteenth-century genius could make them; and silver framed the mirrors on the wall, and mounted the ivory cabinets, the ebony or richly painted spinet, with its keys of precious stones, the inlaid and begemmed tables, the enamelled or embossed bellows set with 'a large pearl' or the 'Dauphin's arms,' the lanterns made of delicate bronze plates lighted with rock crystals.

Massinger, writing early in 1600, describes the

luxury used by *accouchées*, and fixes the date of various forms of furnishing:

> I well remember it, as you had been
> An absolute princess, since they have no more,
> Three several chambers hung, the first with arras
> And that for waiters; the second crimson satin
> For the meaner sort of guests; the third of scarlet
> Of the rich Tyrian die; a canopy
> To cover the brat's cradle; you in state
> Like Pompey's Julia.

Again, he speaks of a rich bedchamber:

> The silver bathing-tub, the cambric rubbers,
> The embroidered quilt, the bed of gossamer
> And damask roses.

Comfort as well as grandeur was then thoroughly well understood—the beds of embroidered velvet suited well the velvet nightgown of the maiden Queen; the open fireplace cast its heat across a 'fringed rug' on the hearth; the heavy chairs were softly cushioned; and rich canopies and curtains protected from draughts of door or blazoned window the still more blazoned and jewel-laden fair ones in ruff and farthingale.

There is no scene more elaborately rich than such a chamber as Elizabeth may have sate in, watching the dances of the pageantry of gods and goddesses that loyalty had prepared for her diversion; for all that genius, skill, wealth, knowledge, and love of ease could do had then been done. There is an interesting relic of contemporary, nay, earlier work, a *commode* once belonging to Bishop Ridley, martyred under Mary, now in the possession of Cotsford Dick, Esq. The workman-

ship, and the contrasting colours of the woods it is made of, are equally beautiful. Such a *commode* Shakespeare may have leaned on in the chambers of the great in London where he walked, and spoke, and caught his shrewdest thoughts; though the rude provincial chambers, crooked, dark, low-pitched, wherein he was bred up or wooed his Anne, did not boast of inlaid slabs or bronzes, nor doors that a girl could pass through without stooping.

We have not yet found the period in Early England when colour was repugnant; for up to the Renascence, if not throughout it, brilliancy of effect within doors was held so far from inconsistent with the grey weather outside, that no effort or cost was neglected to enhance it, as a kind of compensation or apology. The gayest and richest costume, and colouring as bright and ubiquitous as that which adorns the Alhambra, were cherished wherever they could be obtained within doors. Without doors, of course, the rain soon reduced all colours to one.

There was a time—brief, happily—when a reaction against colour occurred; but this was hardly an English reaction; it took place about 1620. But we may as well realise clearly that, whatever be the charms of dingy hues and uninteresting ornaments, curved or angular, they are by no means 'Early English,' or indeed English at all.

Renascence 'Taste.'

The Renascence was a glorious branching forth of new thoughts, and new energy. The distinction between

beauty and ugliness *per se* only then began to be thoroughly appreciated, and the admiration of physical beauty seemed to burst into life like a newly found faculty. But the Renascence had its seamy side.

In Mediæval art the 'moral,' or subject was paramount, in Renascence art the impression on the eye was paramount, and ideas were subjugated to sensations, so that painting and sculpture were reduced—or raised—to the level of the sister-art, music, wherein, not ideas but emotions only, are conveyed and appealed to.

Art no longer sought to preach, to instruct, to elevate, in this or that department; she was no longer the spiritual guide, genial, homely, earnest, but a soft minister to pleasure and excitement. The artist himself was no longer a humble workman in an apron—he had become a gentleman. The sacred stories which still remained popular along with the pagan ones, were so chiefly because they were such capital 'subjects.' The dying or dead Christ was a magnificent chance for elaborate anatomical study and perspective; the Holy and pure Madonna, or Susannah, lent a first-rate excuse for exhibiting the fair rounded forms of a beautiful woman, and if in her new guise she did not look so very pure, she earned Phryne's own pardon—she was so handsome. For buyers who did not care to envelop their admiration for beauty in the odour of sanctity the boldest Pagan subjects were always ready. Venus and Cupid, at all ages and under all circumstances, nymphs pursued by Satyrs, Leda, Danaë, even portraits of well known dames completely disrobed, such as Titian's 'Vanity,' or robed so as to increase the shock, came to be fashion-

able, and still remain for the instruction of the young, in the National Gallery and other museums. The lower departments of art, such as furniture, jewellery, millinery (then under the sway of the best artists),[1] mimicked the higher, of course, and every clock, cabinet, lute, chair, bedstead, helmet and earring bristled with similar pleasing images. There can never have been a time when the popular taste was so wholly sensuous since the day when Praxiteles first ventured to exhibit an undraped female form and was forgiven by public opinion.

All this was completely different from Mediæval *naïveté*, behind which there was always a 'moral,' satirical or mournful, to be deciphered; and to my mind the Mediæval mood was the noblest, despite all the superstition and simplicity swept away and scorned by Renascence unbelief. However, there are so many learned persons to dilate on the glorious history of this stupendous movement that I may be excused from lauding it further, and may point out moreover that the term *Renascence art* is a very wide one. Great as was much of it, and important as was the change which began here under Henry VIII., much also of the art of the new school was as bad as art can be. The architecture of the transition or Tudor time was often picturesque, but fantastic and ridiculous. Habit could not part with the Gothic element, though it had fallen into discredit as the blossom of Popery, so it was jumbled with the classic in the oddest medley. Grecian porches were clapped on to Gothic façades, or a classic quadrangle was reached

[1] For instance, Michael Angelo designed the costume of the Pope's Swiss Guard, and ugly enough it is, with its Renascence inconsistencies.

by a Gothic tower: galleries climbed above galleries, much like Arthur's fabled palace at Camelot.

Skelton describes the quaint picturesque richness of Tudor erections,

> Building royallie
> Their mansions curiouslie
> With turrets and with toures
> With halles and with boures
> Stretching to the starres;
> With glasse windowes and barres:
> Hanging about their walles
> Clothes of gold and palles,
> Arras of rich array
> Fresh as flowres in May.

And I have already quoted the contemporary complaints against the novel splendour which came in fashion, in 'A Tudor Room.'

Sir Anthony Brown raised these strange and gorgeous piles in England when Henry emulated Francis I. in encouraging art in every branch, both by inviting foreign artists and employing native ones to decorate his splendid walls, his dinner-tables, wives, and horses with precious metals and sumptuous colours. Henry was probably a man of taste, for he could simultaneously admire the Gothic architecture of Sir Richard Lea, the Tudor mansions of his barons, and the foreign innovations of Holbein and John of Padua.

Inigo Jones himself had to compound with the conservative English tastes, and mix Gothic with his Greek for some time after he became eminent: and one cannot help wishing that the Gothic could have assimilated some of the new lights without dying in the process, so

that England might have retained her own peculiar style of native art. But religious prejudice gave the *coup de grâce*, and the classic exotic strengthened its roots all over England, at first full of vigour and beautiful, presently decaying through its own radical unfitness for our climate, and want of understanding on the part

FIG. 6.—Lamp-stand, Italian, sixteenth century: full of anatomical impossibilities.

of artists who tried to improve upon the classics. The scientific and much-tried Wren was the last who reared fine classic structures in England. Nothing can be weaker, baser, more corrupt than the Henri Quatre architecture: and a great mass of the art applied to

FIG. 7.—Knife-case, dated 1564; an instance of the bathos of art.

FIG. 3.—Sixteenth century cabinet: an instance of the worship of wreck.

domestic purposes was worse than weak, in its determined subversion of purpose, and straining after false effects; it was ignobly grotesque. I have sketched a knife-case (1564) and a lamp-stand, from one of the South Kensington Handbooks, where the misuse of the fashionable anatomical knowledge in the attempt to be novel produces an effect on the mind as unpleasant as any 'Two-headed Nightingale.' And this was what the Renascence began to do for domestic ornament.

Under this degraded class must be noted that singular tendency which we seem to trace, and which may be named

The Worship of Wreck,

—as false a motive as the love of disease and disgust into which it developed—the reaction from the love of beauty.

I may instance some of the furniture, however fine in detail, which recalled tombs, like the funereal ornaments which ladies decked themselves with; copies from sarcophagi adapted to tureens and flowerstands, architectural cabinets like dolls' churches, surmounted by that strange long-popular ornament, which can mean nothing but the broken pediment of a Greek temple—though this can scarcely have been generally understood, since the lines of the side-angles do not always correspond with those of the centre ones.

Such a value set on actual deformity, such admiration for not the beauty wrecked but the wreck itself, *must* be degraded and evil, the bathos of discrimination or 'taste.'

But on this pivot turn many works of eminent

seventeenth century artists, viz., public buildings, *secrétaires* and cabinets (their minute replicas), chests, jewellery, &c., because all the world was mad about ancient Rome and Greece, whose demolished greatness was just coming to light. Discrimination seemed moribund if not defunct. Anything would do to play at being classic with, just as nowadays anything will do to play at being Queen Anne with. What else could be expected of people who parodied in their very dresses of velvet and lace (as I shall show) the hero's iron corslets and shoulder-pieces, and forsted the girt-up *chitonia* of marble goddesses on a farthingale and stomacher?

When the passion for antiquities thus developed into the worship of wreck—and when the worship of wreck was pushed a little farther by the craving for excitement, the result was so dismal that it is a moral in itself. The jaded appetites, tired of pleasure, demanded a new shock, and whilst some of the pioneers, like Conservatives, strove to confine the sprouting fashions exclusively to classic precedent, others, like wild Radicals, ran forward and devised a school of ghastly ornament to produce the last weary titillation.

Ghastly Ornament.

The passion for bringing monumental ideas into every domestic detail affected colour with form naturally. It was greatly encouraged by Louis XIII., under whom they sculptured everything—the caskets, the mantelshelves, the doors, the very trees in the garden—into columns, arches, or geometric figures, the elements of

architecture; and their 'ever-veering fancy,' swift as Ettarre's, turned to the sharp contrast of ebony with white metal or ivory as a recoil from the bright colours in furniture that had begun to wrestle with the dazzling walls. Everything began to recall the coffin-lid. And as for pictures, the grim penance of Mary of Egypt (unnatural union of a frame formed for love and joy with wilful wretchedness), the flaying of Marsyas, the dissecting table, and like subjects, were set on the walls to raise the spirits.

So sepulchral ebony heralded in the morbid attraction for horrors, developing perhaps from the general sentimentalism, such as the Worship of Wreck. Burial and exhumation being fixed ideas in the mind of society, death and destruction were subjects to be played with and made pretty.

They did not make them pretty, though skulls were introduced into the pictures of the most seductive women: though the courts adopted funereal trinkets, and the merriest ladies pursued pleasure with death's-heads and cross-bones embroidered on their dresses, people sniffed essences from skull pomanders, consulted skull watches, and wore crossbone rings—liked the semblance of decay everywhere, and cultivated a charming *chair de poule* even at the dinner-table; objects which were perhaps intended to remind people that they ought to mend their ways, but which only preached the doctrine, 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.'

To this period belong the nasty little ivory corpses with worms protruding, such as we find in every curiosity shop. To this period also belong the disagreeable monu-

ments in Westminster Abbey whereon skeleton Deaths wrestle and box for the moribund.

Of course all contemporary art was not morbid or disgusting; and even if we put out of court those many immortal names which made the early Renascence a living movement—Dürer, Holbein, Leonardo, Michael Angelo and the rest—the average designers show a wondrously high standard of ability and sense of grace and humour: indeed the Renascence grotesque could have hardly become so popular had it not been that the knowledge of proportion, notably of the animal frame, was to a great extent common property.

Many were the elegant pieces of furniture now to be seen in museums, such as the Cluny,[1] and private collections, whereon the tiny pediments, friezes, and engaged columns (for all mimicked architectural structure) were covered with mythological and other scenes carved with incredible delicacy or etched with marvellous spirit and freedom; though the accurate proportions only increased the doll's-house look of them. Many were the works on which the grotesque union of animal limbs with foliage or shells was clever and decorative without being disagreeable, as in figs. 28 and 29, pp. 109, 111.

The fitful vagaries of domestic decoration and array, in dead-colour and mock horror, did not hinder the Renascence from being an epoch of supreme skill in colouring; while in many cases where taste seems entirely at fault, as in the above-named cabinets, the construction is exquisite, the treatment fascinating by mere littleness, like a baby's hand, and we waste time

[1] E.g., Nos. 601, 603, 594 & 592 Cluny Museum, described on p. 168.

Fig. 9. Cabinet showing architectural fashions in furniture.

while scoffing (as we were meant to waste it) in investigating the ever-novel vagaries about the sides. As we pore into the tiny portals we think of the hapless Princess in Mme. D'Aulnoy's fairy-tale who was befriended by little pagodins—which at any moment may step forth and speak to us! Perhaps that imaginative but not moral lady derived her idea from the art which accompanied her luxurious life.

Black and White in its Place.

Before quitting the subject of the elaborate ebony work in the seventeenth century, we must confess that black and white in its place certainly adds a touch of elegance to a richly coloured room, like an unexpected turn of speech which pleases the ear. It gives a moment's relief and rest amid the storm of colour, for the small bas-reliefs are not visible till you are close to them, and then the carvings are a pleasant surprise; the same is true of the ivory panels. The finest specimens are mounted in silver, the less costly ones in pewter or white metal, with bone in place of ivory.

They became popular enough to be produced in blackened deal for buyers who would not pay for ebony, and such degenerate copies are still quite common in Italy, some of the cheapest bearing etchings on bone, full of talent, which I would be glad to believe any English workman could supply.

Conditions may no doubt render dead black, or black and white, quaint and pleasing, as on the mighty sides of Florence Cathedral, gay, moving life around, and a

purple sky overhead: so in a shrine of gold and crimson and endless dancing patterns. But *per se* black and white are lugubrious and dull, and when over-done, as they certainly were at one time, are most coffin-like and grievous.

This gloomy development of pagan taste ended in a reaction; of course, healthy opinion reasserted itself, Florentine mosaics revived, the ebony sepulchres were brightened up with gilding and tortoiseshell, into luminous colour—Rubens himself did not disdain to furnish designs for such cabinets, if report saith true.

Ruskin, mourning over the death of the noble Gothic period, speaks strongly about this want of colour. 'The winter which succeeded was colourless as it was cold; and although the Venetian painters struggled long against its influence, the numbness of the architecture prevailed over them at last, and the exteriors of all the latter palaces were built only in barren stone.'—'Stones of Venice,' iii. 17.

Renascence Influence on Dress.

In a series of papers published in the 'Queen'[1] in the autumn of 1879, I traced the origin, rise, and progress of costume, and showed how it was influenced by the spirit of the time. Fashion, in all its varieties, springs from a basis of good sense, rises to extravagant pitch, and then falls into an ugly decadence leading to a violent reaction.

This basis of good sense is generally the 'becoming'

[1] See *Queen*, Nov. 6, 1879: *In and Out of Fashion*.

(the fitting, the required) forced up from that much discussed primal instinct to emphasize one's own individuality which certainly exists, rooted beneath the instinct of imitation. Furniture and dress follow a like course; which may be represented by a curving line, the line of life, as of beauty, and the ups and downs are deter-

FIG. 10.—Line of beauty.

mined by the inexorable laws of (1) vitiation of the eye, and (2) the need of due relief.

Naturally, a movement so strong and universal as the

FIG. 11.—Imitation Roman.

FIG. 12.—Imitation Greek.

Renascence of art could not fail to have a marked influence on costume as it had on domestic decoration, education, and manners; but I never saw its extraordinary result in English dress observed or explained

before my paper appeared in the 'Art Journal' of May 1880.

It does not seem to be generally understood that the two most grotesque fashions which ever caricatured us were the result of trying to fit the classic dress to England. The figure of Queen Elizabeth, or Imitation Roman (King's Library, British Museum, reproduced in my 'Art of Beauty,' p. 42), a mere clothes-prop wherein every line of the human frame was contradicted, or the far less grotesque form seen in fig. 11, shows us one classic fit *in extremis*. The Imitation Greek (fig. 12, time of the First Empire), in her puny miserable array, suffering as painfully from too little clothing as her ancestress had suffered from too much, shows us the other. Both represent the last and worst stage of the fashion just before reaction.

The Renascence broke upon Italy first, then England, at a time when the costume was especially stiff and artificial, and occupied very great attention, being held a genuine element in the perfection of the individual;[1] and it is curious enough to observe the way in which the Renascence was mirrored in such walking mounds of silk and slashes as figs. 11 and 15 (from Fairholt's 'Costume in England'), and how little it reformed the dress in either country. As the antique sculptures were unearthed, and Greek influence or Roman art projected itself through Roman influence upon Art in England, we perceive an abortive attempt to imitate the ancient Roman habiliments. The dresses were no intelligent translation of the classic into an English form, as was

[1] See note, p. 16.

much of the architecture and furniture of the period, but a blind copy, as a child might copy an unknown alphabet in the twilight. It became the 'mode' to be portrayed as a Latin warrior—e.g. the statue of James II. in Whitehall Gardens—as at another epoch it was thought advisable to be portrayed as a Greek athlete—e.g. the statue of the Duke of Wellington opposite Apsley House. The tailor mixed up indiscriminately what was Roman and what was Greek. Anything dug up would do to play at being classic with. The heavy English brocades or 'broched satins,' such as Henry VIII. loved, were too precious to be sacrificed, so they were 'adapted.' High heels—dear to women the world over!—were invented, a raised sole of cork similar to the old Greek *κάττυμα* (not a perilous block, as in modern shoes, at one end of the sole, but a wedge-shaped sole that supported the foot while raising it; clearly visible in the above-named portrait of Elizabeth); and as the sandal was inadmissible in England, the upper part of the shoe was *trimmed* something like it! The ruff was a sweet novelty, exactly classic, but it could be 'worked in' with ingenuity; so they worked it in, and what a medley was.

12.-13.—Henry VIII. and

Henry VIII. presents the first signs of The scaly corslet of the Latin warrior, of own broad doublet was a careful copy, an up skirts of marble goddesses, were grafted

stomacher and farthingale. We may see the popular version of the classic fold (κόλπος) clearly in fig. 11. The very halo of saints, or the protective plate of statues mistaken for a halo, seems to have been at times aimed

From early tapestry in the possession of the Rev. R. H. Haweis.

13) or pickardil (fig. 11). The double be drawn through it, was apparently not nd the *raison d'être* of every portion of —real utility, was unobserved; but the fulps adapted itself comfortably to the drum-

farthingale in which the fashionable ladies strutted, thinking themselves very classic-looking, no doubt, as they chirped in Greek and Latin and viewed the mythologic pageants that Elizabeth loved. The early tapestry here engraved from a piece in my possession forms a curious link between Gothic and Renascence times, but unfortunately the details, clear in the original, have been destroyed in the engraving. It probably represents the Marriage of the Virgin; and the figures, robed in the fashionable costume, are clearly striving to be mistaken for ancient Romans. The bride's dress proves the misconception of the classic double girdle. She wears two girdles upon the hips to bear up the weight of her skirt, with a *close bodice*, having its own (a third) waist, above; a mantle in which the broad collar can only be intended to simulate folds, if it means anything, and held up by the bride's-maid in the mediæval manner. She wears small tentative ruffs at wrist and neck; her maids are dressed in a kind of Holbein costume, not so ultra-fashionable as their privileged mistress. The plaits of fair hair are rather mediæval, rising up from the ear. One of the most amusing details is the recognition of the Greek hair-knot over the brow. These royalties are determined to have some such lump, and have carefully fabricated in it some other [illegible] the bridegroom's case it is affixed to his [illegible] shining above; in the bride's, it look[illegible] small-tooth comb. The mock-sandals [illegible] observe the buskins! Titianesque [illegible] enough with the clinging tunic of Greece [illegible] and the leaf-shaped 'dagges' (purely mediæv[illegible]

the soldierly corslet which resembles fig. 18, page 102. The bridegroom's mantle classic in front, Gothic behind. The Bishop, neither Pagan, Jew, nor Catholic in garb, gives them the blessing used alike by Pope and Jewish high-priest, with two fingers. Compare the long plaited beards of the chief personages with the short and simple beards of the followers, Roman soldiers; the Gothic 'table dormant,' the little hound gnawing the rejected bones, and the general absence of perspective, with the advanced Renascence costumes. The simple roast fowl with larded bacon lie on a lordly silver dish, and the loving-cup goes round in the bridal party's honour—we will trust the latter have had or will afterwards get something to eat.

Fig. 19.—Petal-hose with short waist and tuck derived from the classic.

But Renascence influence on dress went farther than this. Men quadrupled their apparent muscle by bransuffed trunk-hose (*fig. 19*), cut into long slashes which recalled the warrior's plated protection, as in fig. 18, till their outline emulated, then excelled, the grotesquely 'cyclored' figures which gesticulate on Greco-Etruscan [illegible] (6). The very lace was forced to be heavy Spanish rose-point growing more and more solid as it seemed to recall a marble. Strangely enough, this was the *décadence* founded on art-research and enthusiasm for *l'antique*.

To the same Greco-Roman excavations we trace the origin of the stomacher itself, the shot-bellied doublet, taken from the metal corslet with the magnified peak weighted with shot, and *gaîs*. The tabs seen in Hollar's prints of middle-class women, square-shaped around the

FIG. 20.—Etruscan figure, from a vase.

waist, but with a single round tab in front (fig. 21), long puzzled me. The *square* tabs are clearly traceable to the early Greek armour, belt and all; in fact, the whole bodice was not unlike fig. 19, when the stomacher gave way to the very short waist, itself drawn from the high-girt chiton. The first indication of the cape or scarf,

called the 'falling whisk,' seemed to echo the shoulder pieces (fig. 17), which in later Greek took a stiffer form (fig. 18), but the *round* tab in the centre, like the round stomacher, can, I think, only be attributed to some vague

Fig. 17.

Fig. 18.
Early Greek figures.

Fig. 19.

remembrance of the conventional drawing of heroic muscles, called *rectus* and *obliquus externus* (fig. 21).

In fact, there is hardly any detail of costume belonging to the classics which we cannot see echoed in England between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries. The small shawl-like himation (ἱμάτιον) had its counterpart in the floating scarf so often seen in Renascence pictures—at times foolishly combined with a stiff bodice, as in 'Titian's Daughter' raising the casket above her head, and the Magdalene in Rubens's 'Descent from the Cross'—and a similar scarf came in vogue in Empire times. The slashed shoe of Henry VIII. and the high shoe of Cromwell were both copied from the classic, as I showed in my 'Pedigree of Shoes,' in the 'Art Journal.'[1] Sandals were simulated by trimming, as in the nineteenth century they were simulated

[1] 'The Æsthetics of Dress,' *Art Journal*, April, May, and July, 1880.

by emasculated ribbons; while the hair went through various metamorphoses, in which one classic fashion succeeded another. The browband, with side-curls or

FIG. 29.—Pease-cod bellied doublet, from Bertelli.

with the 'bull-front,' a very common Roman hair-fashion, which always comes to the fore during a classic fit, was one of the Stuart modes. Our different renderings of the high Greek knot in Elizabethan and in Napoleonic times, is clearly shown in figs. 11 and 12, page 95. But

as old Rome herself modified old Greek decorations according to her own passion for ornate self-display, so

FIG. 21.—Figure of Hercules, showing the muscles which may have originated the round tab.

FIG. 22.—Tabs: from a print by Hollar.

the costumes of Elizabethan pseudo-classicism developed in the direction of bulk; while those of the Empire,

FIG. 23.—Renascence version of a classic fashion.

FIG. 24.—Empire version of the same.

rather Spartan than Roman, developed in the contrary direction—nothingness.

Very different versions, too, of that prettier old Greek hair-fashion visible on some Syracusan coins—the knot, with curls beside the face—may be compared in figs. 22

and 23; the one seventeenth century, the other early nineteenth century rendering. The same may be said

FIG. 25.—A classic fashion (from Fashion, 1788).

FIG. 26.—19th century rendering of same.

of figs. 25 and 26, by-the-by; the first being true classic and the last the decadence of its copy, about 1855.

And these two heads may be held symbolical of the inferior treatment of all matters artistic, which seems to distinguish 'Empire' from 'Stuart' classic furniture.

CHAPTER III.

The Grotesque and Raphael Ornament.

I HAVE before hinted that individual opinion ought to be respected, and I may hope for the indulgence of a few when I say that the grotesqueness of much classic art, notably that which was so popular during the Renascence, makes it unpleasant and unbecoming in rooms intended for daily use. This is especially visible upon the walls, for which many forms of art, charming elsewhere, are unsuited. Walls, though they may be bright, should never be obtrusive. They are a background, not a picture; they should contribute rest to the eye, because they are constantly on a level with it, and we cannot escape their influence. The grotesque[1] is an element which is interesting when it comes unexpectedly and naturally, like caprices in a sweet nature, or trials in life which can be conquered and got over; but a life (or a

[1] This word is said by some to be derived from the excavations or 'grottoes' at Rome, in which paintings were found of a character remarkable enough to coin a term for.

friend) entirely made up of trials and caprices would be intolerably vexing, and too much of grotesque art is intolerable anywhere, but especially in a room one much inhabits, and wherein one should always find solace, calm, and delight. The incongruities even in classic ornament, such as what we call Pompeiian, clever as that is, and cleverly as Renascence artists (nay, Raphael himself) caught up the same trick and manner, are to me tiring and unsatisfactory, like an uneasy dream, even when inspired by the hand whose supreme skill in this fashion, novel in his day, gave it for all time his name. The merely fanciful scroll-work, and the endive ornaments (an advance upon the acanthus) delivering themselves in unexpected places of chubby boys or grimacing heads, birds or nondescript dragons, or forming faces by their own curves even when beasts and birds are not introduced as in fig. 27, are distinctly objectionable, I think, except in small quantities. The present cut, from a painted pilaster in a well-known church, is suggestive of fully six grotesque faces, and originally, I am persuaded that this suggestive-

FIG. 27.—'Raphael' ornament.

ness was intentional. Much of the so-called 'Raphael ornament' on Italian pottery, friezes, &c., is wonderfully clever, good in colour, and admirable in its precision, ingenuity, and neat adaptation to the shapes of the objects it covers. Still, a little of it goes a long way, and I should as little like to live in a room so decorated, even by Raphael, as I should in the gay rooms at Pompeii, so small that one could never get away from the clever little walls.

The horrible creations miscalled 'Raphael,' which come into vogue by fits every few years—impossible conglomerations of boys, ribbons, swans, butterflies, and boneless dragons, mixed up without regard to relative proportions and weights, on curtains, gowns, chintzes, tea-cups, panels, tiles, even bonnet strings—are still less adapted to sitting-rooms than the prototypes. Stencilling and freehand arabesques are best suited to long corridors and passages, where the images are quickly passed and forgotten after the momentary impression. At the same time, since houses ought to reflect their owners' taste, if people like this kind of thing they should be allowed to have it; and we may fairly allow that, when good of its kind, it has a certain charm in certain places. Some people like it for its oddity; some for its endless variety of lines and tints; others like it for its associations with bright Italian days and brighter names. The studio of Mr. Alma Tadema, painted by himself, is perhaps the best example in England of modern Pompeiian art. The celebrated corridors in the Vatican at Rome, painted under Raphael's immediate supervision, are probably the finest known instance of the Renascence adoption of this kind of ornament.

FIG. 28.—Raphael ornament from the Loggia at the Vatican.

FIG. 29.—Raphael ornament from the Loggia at the Vatican.

To those who are attracted to this style I will give a few hints for the decoration of rooms.

A Pompeiian Room.

In the best examples of Pompeiian walls, there is a gradation of colour from the ceiling downwards, though this is not by any means a fixed law. The gradation downwards from light to deep colour is pleasing, because founded upon the natural law of gravity, such as we might study in a flask of cloudy wine, where the deepest colour would sink and leave a clear pale hue above it. The dado may be black, with red pilasters and frieze, and panels of yellow, white, or blue, on which a small figure of girl or goddess may dance or feed her goat. Above may be a broad band of white or yellow, with decorations upon it in all colours, and really beyond the reach of strict criticism in their capricious independence of art rules—gay, showy, sometimes almost vulgar, could the word be applied to things so attenuated, graceful, and ingenious, and showing such perfect knowledge of proportional areas.

No one should attempt the decoration of a Pompeiian room without experience, or the advice of experienced artists and decorators used to freehand painting; for the whole and sole charm depends upon the painter's facile mode of striking off the arabesques, inventing as he goes, not copying on one side of a pattern the reversed lines of the other. When it is anything short of first-rate, and without the interest attaching to antiquity, Pompeiian art is nothing but fantastic and vulgar.

The common proportions for the decorations are a dado about one-sixth of the height of the wall, on which broad pilasters half as wide as the dado divide the wall into three or more panels. The frieze which unites the pilasters varies in width, but it is often one-fourth the height of the wall from the top. Owen Jones bears out my views in saying that 'the upper space is frequently white, and is always subjected to *a much less severe treatment than the parts below*' (remember the above-suggested law of gravity), 'generally representing the open air, and upon the ground are painted those fantastic architectural buildings which excited the ire of Vitruvius.

Colours which do not contrast strongly, such as yellow and red, are divided by shading, *au naturel*, and sometimes the inherent Italian love of spectral illusion made the pilasters and friezes of the old world quite deceptive, as in South Italy it still tries to make the walls external and internal; we have all seen false vistas containing ladies sighing on balconies, windows through which peep sly maidens, and scenes with fountains and woods depicted where by no possibility such things could really be. To this style we Britons should be more lenient if we remembered that the school was doubtless founded on the love of air, flowers, and outdoor amusements which the Italians have ever nursed to this extent, that when it was too hot to go forth, the ever-shady garden was to be had within, even in the very bedroom.

In the Roman house of Germanicus, of which the wreck remains within the palace of Tiberius, his son, by whose filial piety it was preserved, we have the finest

known examples of the so-called 'Pompeiian ornament' —a name which sounds particularly absurd applied to Rome where it probably flourished best: we ought to give up the name *Pompeiian* now for *Greco-Roman*, as the school was probably Greek, and every one knows this decoration was not confined to the fashionable watering-place near Naples, though Greek workmen may have worked there, as they did in Rome.

It is likely that Roman decoration both within and without the house surpassed the Greek in magnificence, if not in purity of taste: and that when the Romans faced their brick and stucco buildings with marble, and preferred elaborate mosaic to the Greek coloured-plaster floors, they also improved upon the Greek walls and ceilings.

Let us rebuild the rooms in the house of Germanicus from its present relics. How charming they are, in spite of all the art-canons which forbid naturalistic decorations! Deception has clearly been aimed at in the painted pilasters that stand all round the room, and pretend to uphold the roof; also in the framework of a verandah which seems beyond them, supporting rich festoons of flowers and fresh cool fruit, tied with ribbons. The perspective is admirable: the verandah seems closed with silk or linen panels. The pilasters—whose roundness cheats the eye, and extends the apparent area of the room as a modern mirror does—run up into delicately worked capitals; the ceiling is covered with exquisite stucco reliefs, such as Plato speaks of in Greece, white or nearly white. The dado represents a tempting seat, like a broad window-sill; it is about two feet high, sup-

posing the height of the wall eleven, and is broken by the bases of the columns, painted like projecting dragons. The central frieze unites these slender columns by a broad neutral-tinted band a foot and a half deep, on which comic freehand sketches of the life of the time are painted in brownish colour. The spaces above this frieze, between the columns, might represent the open sky—a common habit—save that grotesque scrolls such as Raphael loved break up the light colour with wavy lines.

FIG. 30.—Frieze of painted wall, in the House of Germanicus, Palaces of the Cæsars.

In another room (fig. 31) the simulation of aërial perspectives is carried still further. Apparent openings in the walls guarded by half-open shutters (of course glass windows did not exist) discover various domestic scenes: there, in what may seem an upper bedroom, slaves prepare the basins for ablutions; or lovers murmur in their bower; or, strangest of all, glimpses of ruined temples and basilicas flatter the Roman sense of power. Why else were ruins painted on these royal panels? These ancient

paintings of still more ancient demolitions remind us curiously of Renascence carvings, and Empire sketches and models, of ruined Rome, proving how history repeats itself, and human nature too. There again, we catch sight of an apparently neighbouring house (not

FIG. 31.—Painted wall, from the House of Germanicus, Palatine of the Cæsars.

at all unlike some of Cubitt's!) on the leads whereof women and children are airing themselves.

The painting is advanced enough technically to make the old story of Zeuxis deceiving the birds and

Parrhasius deceiving Zeuxis quite believable. This sort of illusory painting has been dear to Italians from time immemorial, and they got it from much-vaunted Greece.

In this ancient dwelling nothing is so astonishing as the likeness of its decorations to those of modern native work; and British justice must admit that the ancient Roman work is no better than good modern Roman work of the kind, *pace* sapient enthusiasts. Admirable as was some of it, much was bad; probably prices varied, like talent; and we find figures carelessly coloured and out of drawing, though every touch of the brush and the composition itself prove that the art of painting was as advanced as the art of sculpture; that is to say, it could deceive the eye, and skill can go no farther than that. In Pompeii and at Rome both the bad and good mural painting alike show the alert precision of the accustomed hand.

Yes, the rooms with all their faults are charming. The panels with their false openings, thorough-shining, captivate us, and the mythic sea-scenes, wherein mermaids ride almost audibly through the waves, seem for a moment natural enough viewed through a well-painted arch. And the doorways, also arched and lined with stucco bas-reliefs like the ceiling (relics of such stucco are close at hand), are pretty, furnished, in the mind's eye, by rich hangings of broidery such as the Phrygian women made, and which came to be prized under the name of *phrygionia*.

In yonder corner we seem to see a fine candelabrum of bronze, such as the Naples Museum preserves, now green with burial, or black with rust, *then* bright as

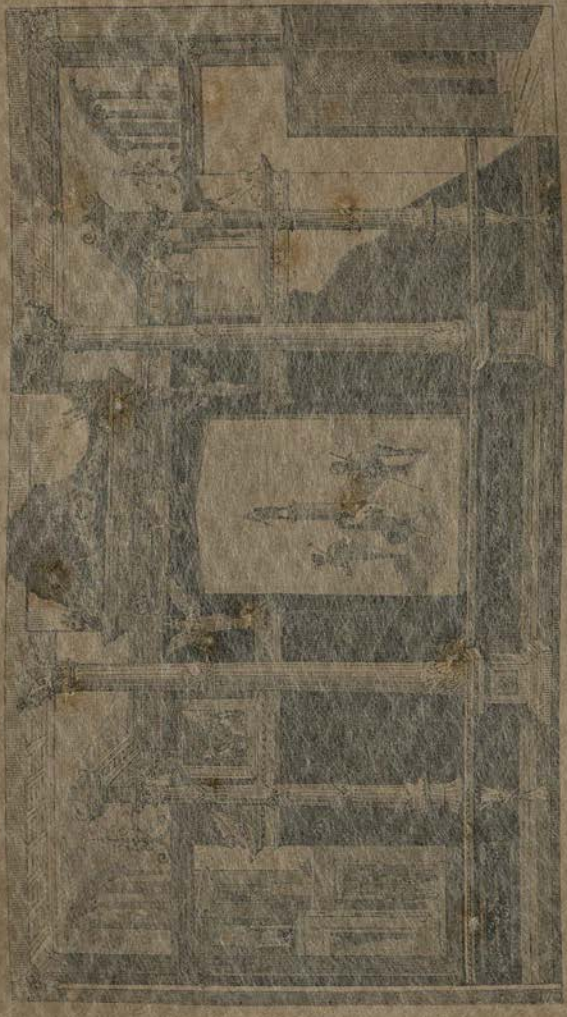

FIG. 38.—Painted wall, from the House of Germanicus, Palace of the Cæsars, Rome.

gold. There, was a superb tripod of Corinthian or Sicyonian workmanship, with copper coal-pan that Tiberius as a boy may have been warned off, many a time. Few are the draperies, which might interfere with the soft passage of the welcome breeze in Rome's sultry clime, but there a small soft carpet lies before a tortoise-shell couch with ivory feet like wolves' or bulls', and parti-coloured cushions. The room is full of a soft bloom of many colours; gold, glass, and precious stones glimmer from shelf and bench. Now passes by a handsome slave bearing one of those shapely silver basins with an ewer, holding the golden wine and costly unguents to be poured upon the feet of honoured guests; on his arm hang the chaplets which will be offered to the diners when the shadow of the *gnomon* marks the hour of *cœna*. Here on a table of maplewood and bronze stand golden cups among roses whose pink petals strew the pavement beneath. Through yonder door come the sounds of clattering dishes and the ring of silver vessels which slaves are polishing, singing and whistling the while, as what Italian would not? Further away, the tones of a flute, of a fountain, and of a boy's laughter echo through the quiet midday city, and the irrepressible sun creeps along the glowing wall, making the pictured openings, and false verandah, roof and frame, beyond the shrewdly-shaded columns, more deceptive still.

Thus we can be sure that against these bright walls, bright with the purest colours the Greek had (but not pure by our standard of mechanical distillation, otherwise blues, greens, and yellows could never have borne

such violent juxtaposition), stood in Rome and Pompeii wondrous benches and chairs, cushioned with colours to correspond with the walls. The general form of these was chiefly simple, after Greek precedent, but the decoration applied in bronze *repoussé* work, inlaid woods, and mother-of-pearl, was most elaborate and entertaining.

Chairs of Greek form are suitable, therefore, to a modern Pompeiian room, veneered or carved in wood and mounted with bronze claws, and here Mr. Chippendale comes in useful; small tables of marble and precious woods, inlaid with mosaics similar to the antique which afterwards inspired Boule; small stools, and vases and tazze of precious stone, and bronze or gilt statuettes of purest model. The lamps, lustres, and candlesticks ought to be in harmony with the well-known classic forms—serpents, goats, bulls; the couches should exhibit rams' heads supporting festoons of flowers, caryatides, Corinthian columns, and rich broideries. The floor, however, presents a more restful colouring; mosaics of beautiful design in marbles (whose fine colour bore no proportion to the paint on walls glowing in Italian sunlight) might be replaced in England by coloured matting and rugs of quiet tone. In a very brightly variegated room, full of minute details, some part—floor, ceiling, or hangings—must be of a quiet or self-colour, otherwise the effect will be distressingly lacking in repose for the hunted eye. In the old Pompeiian rooms repose was found in the white mass of festive garments, or in the dark mass of shadow cast by a brilliant sun on various parts of the rooms. Had it not been so, the artistic sense would have felt and revolted against the

'burden' of too much broken colour. A fair space of one tint, or a quiet tone in mixture, is indispensable somewhere.

Roman Ornament.

What is called Roman ornament, so dear to the sixteenth century architects, is far nobler, broader in conception than Pompeiian, because the acanthus leaf is in itself so splendid a subject, whether suggested as in Greece, or copied closely as in Rome. The free use of the acanthus (though sprouting impossible Loves and birds and beasts) and adherence to natural forms give the curves and folds new and remarkable interest. The frieze of the Roman Temple at Brescia almost converts us by its naturalistic grace, just enough conventionalised. But Roman ornament is almost always over-elaborate; and when the faults of the style are magnified and stereotyped by machine carving and exact measurements, we find that the acanthus is a very cheap way of producing an effect.

Perhaps the vile stone capitals seen in every cheap new church, and the viler attempts at vegetation in plaster which are turned out by the thousand and fixed on our ceilings by the mile, have made many of us unjust to the fathers of the school. Still, the best of it is tiring, through its perpetual suggestions of broken ideas which elude us as we try to grasp them; and in certain states of health or brain excitement the branching stems would curl and uncurl, the boys nod and gesticulate, the nameless beasts snap and jut their tongues with a horrible monotony of movement.

Grotesque Oak Carving.

Many people imagine that the merit of old oak is its ugliness, and that if you clap a grinning lion's head upon the corner of your table, or a griffin upon a garden seat, you will render it more valuable—in fact, 'Early English.' But the popular lion's head hails from imperial Rome, where it had a real significance. Used as we use it, however, it is for the most part neither valuable nor pleasing. There is an incongruity in placing such an object among the hyper-refined luxuries of an English drawing-room, which has no associations with the arena, and no delight in beast-fights. It is foolish, therefore ignoble. And the 'ignoble grotesque' which Mr. Ruskin has so often and so vehemently condemned is the outcome of affected taste and false feeling, whilst influencing in no wholesome degree, if at all, the moods and ideas of those to whom it pretends to be an æsthetic aid.

Where the mediæval artist placed it, as a gargoyl on bracket *outside* the cathedral, the grotesque figure had a meaning and a beautiful one. It was the image of evil and of folly which our better moods might cast out. Or it indicated the amusing and pardonable side of human weakness not all bad. Only when the religious sense in art was confused or crushed by pagan ideas (which in their native places had had some significance), did the hideous masks of beasts or demons begin to haunt our walls, our chairs, our beds, our very backs, plates, pots, trinkets, in thoughtless and meaningless profusion.

And when such masks and beasts come to be manufactured hastily and by steam, not only without any strength of imagery, but without the most rudimentary anatomical knowledge, the result is ugly without being instructive, or even amusing. So vegetation that ends in beasts, beasts that end in vegetation, are a class of ornamentation which requires genius to make it graceful and handwork to make it interesting; and at its best—when good enough, that is, not to annoy the eye—it should be sufficiently diminutive not to attract it.

The Grotesque as a Background.

Handwork, small, clever, elaborate, is so costly in this country that it may be called unattainable. Amateur industry, working for love's sake, may provide it; professionals, *non credo*. Those who cannot afford it, and cannot do it, may be glad to hear that Raphael ornament or Pompeiian ornament, whether in paint, carved oak, or stucco, does not make a room 'becoming.' It is the very worst background to the majority of human faces and costumes. The broad folds of Roman dress near Roman walls might have 'told' against it, but much is tolerable in a sunny clime which is not so without sunshine. In placid England, where we have few shadows because we are so much in the shade, a simpler yet richer and broader treatment of our walls and pieces of furniture is more effective and more consistent than any form of grotesque art, which is quite at variance with modern modes of thought. Pictures

cannot be hung upon it, pots do not tell against it; massive bronzes do, but neither books nor flowers. It is sure to be over-exciting or else sepulchral.

A foul dragon or grim mask implies an ugly thought; an ugly thought suggests disease, cruelty, or ill-humour. What originated the ruling principle of Chinese art it is difficult to surmise; for it bristles with hideous objects, from which no place is sacred, like threats of danger at every turn. But, as we cannot omit an allusion to the Chinese in our remarks on grotesque art, however rare now is Chinese decoration on a large scale in this country, we may add that, what with their vivid colouring and their restless, often ungraceful forms, Chinese decorative products form as bad a background for English faces in English rooms as is possible to conceive. We have not the tropical sunlight needed to create broad and massive shadows, which in their native land (as we showed anent Pompeian decoration) no doubt counterbalance the brilliant colours and intricate designs; and English costume is quite incongruous with the quaintness of the style. Ruskin says, in comparing English grotesque with Chinese grotesque (the intentionally horrid), 'Our English masks are only stupidly and loathsomely ugly,' by exaggeration of feature or of defect of feature. But the Japanese masks (like the frequent monsters of Japanese art) were inventively frightful, like fearful dreams; and whatever power it is that acts on human minds, enabling them to invent such, appears to me not only to deserve the word "demoniacal," as the only word expressive of its character, but to be logically capable of no other definition.' Something, however, must be allowed for

the surprisingness of a non-habitual type of face and gesture.

I ought, however, to add, to avoid misconception, that in its place Chinese art is worthy of humble study. As colourists the 'Celestials,' when left to their old traditions and unspoilt by modern commerce, are unsurpassed in vigour and quaint harmony, though they seldom arrive at the beauty often found in Japanese art.

A Graver Mood.

To return to England. The transformation visible in English tastes and habits, when the first force of the Renascence had spent itself, was most extraordinary. The stride forward had been tremendous. The new school of grotesque had rooted itself in our soil (just as the birds and the flies of the old world introduced in the new colonies have exterminated indigenous forms); certain masks, caryatides, wreaths, &c., settled into 'standard English patterns,' which have never since lost their popularity; and the love and observation of beauty *per se* seemed, as we have said, to be a newly added faculty. Everything was sacrificed to the impression on the eye, and ideas were prized only as they ministered to the feelings, whether of admiration, or horror, or compassion, or other sentiments. In this way it seems to me that the art of the Renascence was wholly sensual.

Refinements received from France and Italy increased, no doubt, the general average of domestic comfort, decorum, and luxury here; but many super-

fluities both in dress and decoration were dropped quietly, as good sense, forks, and the stern rule of the Protector supervened. Jewelled incrustations, and masses of precious metal went out of fashion with the overgrown ruff and trunkhose, and a certain sobriety of colouring with better thrift characterised goodly houses inhabited by reasonable people.

It is as amusing as it is interesting now to trace in Evelyn's invaluable Diary the orthodox opinions of Wren's enlightened friends on the subject of that old English art which we still call Gothic, as Evelyn first did, in spite of the protest of many antiquaries. Possessed by the flame and glamour of the Renascence, Royalist and Puritan united in forgetting that the new school was Pagan, and without meaning or fitness in our climate and for our faith; whilst the older school was so exclusively Christian and English that the term '*English* Gothic' has had to be coined to distinguish it from Norman and Saxon art. Nothing which was not classic then satisfied 'people of taste': 'The ancient Greek and Roman architecture,' says Evelyn, 'answers all the perfections required in a faultless and accomplished building: such as for so many ages were so renowned and reputed by the universal suffrages of the civilised world, and would doubtless have still subsisted, and made good their claim, had not the Goths and Vandals subverted and demolished them, introducing in their stead a certain fantastical and licentious manner of building, which we have since called *Modern* or *Gothic*; congestions' (what an exquisitely disdainful word for the glorious creations of thought and fancy, free as a

bird, which fourteenth-century genius reared!) 'of heavy, dark, melancholy, and monkish piles, without any just proportion, use, or beauty.'

The Gothic cathedrals of York, Lincoln, Salisbury, Winchester, and many more in France, England, and Germany, can afford to bear even kindly Evelyn's opprobrium.

A Charles the First Room.

The calmer style of Charles I.'s day, when the national mood was revolving slowly from magnificence to severity, a mood which culminated in Puritanism but which was not wholly Puritanic, has for me a very distinct charm. It is a healthy protest. A room of that period may contain all the best points of the Renascence without having wholly lost its real old English character. The refined lady of birth in buckram and satin, with her soft hair frizzed over the ears and knotted behind, her lace-edged apron, and cuffs guarded by muslin over-alls[1] that she cleansed herself, moved with

FIG. 33.—English lady, after Hollar 1640.

[1] An instance is seen in the portrait of Queen Henrietta Maria belonging to Mr. Alfred Morrison.

a quiet housewifely grace through doors built with all orthodox pediments and broken arches after the manner of Inigo Jones. Her cottage-headed windows had roomy seats capitally panelled; her mantelpiece was chiselled by the hand of Old Stone: her casements were latticed with lozenge-shaped panes of glass not over clear. All the bolts and hinges were worthy, honest, solid, unmistakable, and hence often arrived at beauty—if by beauty we mean what gives pleasure, and if all feeling of reliance and satisfaction is pleasurable. Her polished floors shone with 'elbow grease' like her sturdy furniture; her English-made tapestry (designed by Rubens), from the Mortlake works so warmly supported by Charles, was in places overhung by a few pictures, her portrait, no doubt, by Dobson, if not Van Dyck—we can see it now, and her whole character in her pleasant face—or a landscape by Gaspar Poussin.

The broad, well-built room is full of sunshine, which lights up its darkish colouring, greenish hangings, and luminous reflections.

See, the dining-room boasts a ceiling decorated in grotesque by De Cleyn;[1] the table is laid for a merry party; the wide fire-place is alight with wood embers reddening the tall fire-dogs; yonder cupboard full of china is half open; basin and ewer await the guests in the farther corner of the room; the draped table is already surrounded by square-backed, square-seated chairs, and garnished with tall greenish glasses and silver-handled forks and pointed knives; their leather case is visible on the sideboard. The salt-cellar still holds its old place in

[1] There is such a ceiling at Holland House.

the centre of the table. It is *repoussé* gold. Against the tapestry representing Alexander's Victory stand two 'long settles, with a carpet' (couches, or flat sofas). How clean the rooms are kept compared with the 'olden time,' now that carpets are so common, and so comfortable too! The silver trenchers and bowls shine with labour, the big glasses shine and the flagons, down to the 'black jack' of *cuir bouilli* and the heavy greybeard beside the master's chair; and the sides of the room, and the faces of the guests glance back from a score of surfaces in their own colours. The napery is white, well cared for, and abundant. The blue and white pots on the shelf hold a few new pipes for the men, already fond of the new-imported weed! and now the weighted brass clock, engraved with the fashionable sunflower and scrolls, strikes loud on its clear-toned bell.

From hence opens her sleeping apartment a goodly room too with its grave matronly air, its casements and wainscots, its vast oak bed (a little hearse-like now we think) dark with beeswaxing, having a heavy canopy carved inside and out with the conventional lozenge, sunflower, and Greek 'key pattern,' without any addition of paint once so popular; carved and glossy twisted posts and the head rich with Renascence columns and lion heads, amongst which its date is traceable in well-wrought letters. High-backed chairs stand beside also a foot-stool, a table, and the linen press from which the snow-white linen is removed to the lavender-scented drawers in the locked chest. Yonder a fine carved hanging press contains her cloaks and gowns, a cabinet holds her trinkets and smaller clothing, hood, muff, and

riding-whip, clogs and long gloves. In one corner we see the rod with which her maiden smooths the wide expanse of counterpane day by day. Here hangs a convex mirror wherein all the room is diminished with one *coup d'œil*; but on her table a silver-mounted mirror stands, which belonged to her mother and was very costly and precious; likewise the pomander of silver, efficacious for all sickness.

The upper part of the wall and the ceiling have been whitewashed. A small portrait by Holbein of her grandfather is set in the chimney-piece in ebony. Here lie the Caxton Bible, and the prayer-book bound in tortoiseshell with silver clasps, well used during those sad days of forbidden services and vigilant spydom when Royalist and Roundhead were bitterest and cruellest in the cause of charity and Christ's mercy.

There are the heavy brass candlesticks in fine *repoussé* metal, holding the home-made beeswax candlesticks stuck on their spikes—too costly these to burn recklessly. Tabitha and Abigail dare not leave a speck or spot on this or that. Against the wall hard by the graven Venice mirror, hang pens, brushes, scissors, some tucked in straps, some hung on nails, a carcanet of beads, and the hour-glass.

The broidery-frame for crewel-work (or 'crool' she called it) of which curtains and counterpanes themselves are neatly made by her, must not be forgotten, nor the lute and inlaid spinet she thrums Palestrina's new music on.

CHAPTER IV.

The After Glow.

BUT as soon as colour came to the fore again the Renascence was said to be in decline, and indeed if the Renascence means the corpse of old Rome stuck up on end, and not the schools which grew out of pseudo-classicism, the orange had already been squeezed very dry.

Now the literal copies of injured antiques began to give way to the genius which *adapted* classical principles and ideas to modern needs, and many sixteenth-century works are undoubtedly as fine in their way as classic gems themselves—cabinets, tables, buffets, and plenty of minor ornaments.

Tired of architectural models, the public cried for the double effect of stone or wood with colour, and panels of carved marble, agate, precious stones of all kinds and goldsmith's work were once more applied to grounds of different materials. Woods not pronounced enough in natural tone were stained by drugs. The elaborate ornament outside the coffer or cabinet was carried inside,

as though the over-indulged eye was impatient of even a drawer's bottom undecorated.

To the Renascence we owe at least one curse, stucco, which perhaps hailed from old Greece, where the brick houses were plastered with it inside and outside: and it came to be applied to innumerable purposes when the delighted workman saw how great could be the effect with how very little labour. Gleefully he moulded in relief every frame, console, casket he could get hold of, and painted and gilded the delicate patterns which arose in a few hours where carved oak would have challenged his brawny wrists for months. Most of the large pieces in this material have naturally perished, but small coffers and frames, a few *consoles* and tables, still exist as monuments to his delight.

Even while we condemn the school we must own that many of the surviving works in stucco that looks like wood, as well as wood that looks like stucco, are beautiful in their way. The '*consoles*' (what a name for a table beneath a mirror, ye victims of a crumpled roseleaf!) were multiform, full of fancy. The table, such as that on p. 290, is certainly handsome, even elegant, however we may quarrel with the little gasping supports too like slaves distressed by a senseless burden, and women's busts which vanish into wreaths and scrolls in no pleasing fashion. We like and hate these things at once—the school is faulty, but the performance is superb.

Boule and his Work.

Afterwards Boule came along, with his splendid conceptions of colour and permanent material; and aided by the munificence of Louis XIV., he brought in a wholly new kind of manufacture in *pietra dura* and dazzling woods, overlaid with tortoiseshell and ivory, inlaid with metal, brass or silver, stained by heat or acids, further engraved by the burin, and finally mounted in chased brass or ormolu. This kind of work is peculiarly French, and it did not reach England for long after.

Fine specimens are preserved by Sir Richard Wallace, and in the Louvre, &c., which we should admire more had we not been exhausted by the vulgar ill-made copies of 'Louis XIV.' timepieces which bespatter every clockmaker's shop and insolently bear the great king's name. All the seventeenth century furniture 'goes' with 'Raphael ornament' in walls, hangings, or pilasters, for all the art of that century was founded more or less directly upon the exhumations of imperial Rome; and the most elaborate carvings in brass and ormolu had a dim relation to the beautiful bronze mounts which may be studied in the Naples Museum.

Much of it was gaudy and meretricious in effect—much of it was sufficiently so to be absolutely vulgar, like most modern copies of it. Ebony false or true, begemmed with lapis, carnelian, silver and malachite—or their parodies—generally has a frivolous look compared with the solid, honest, unpretentious (yet how masterly!) decoration of the older secretaires and hutches. And

yet the irreproachable skill and spirited talent lavished on these costly works of doubtful taste in the decline of the Renascence about the reign of Louis XIV. sometimes force one to admire what one cannot altogether approve. Dangerous precedent! The laborious marquetry in woods which hardly bore the sunlight; 'trophies' of musical instruments, or rustic implements, or amorous emblems decked with gay ribbons; the clever chasings in ormolu which crept about the fantastic tables and bulging commodes that seldom confessed their real purpose —like their owners; the satin-wood wardrobes sprinkled with minute inlaying or painted by Angelica Kauffmann —all these things savour of time misspent. The 'trophies' must sometimes have warped and come up—they always faded; the *plaques* of tortoiseshell, or porcelain, or Chinese lacquer must have suffered accidental blows with dumb perpetual unforgiveness: they were not framed as furniture should be, to meet the stress of time, to be equal to all emergencies, and endure a chance blow with equanimity. This kind of jewellery-work is better suited to ladies' ornaments, work-boxes, tea-trays and book-covers, than to *garde-robes* and *secrétaires* which must not only hold secrets but *protect* them. Still it was by no means inconsistent with the levity and luxury of the courts where it attained its highest popularity, for I have laid down as an axiom that the true art of a period reflects the character of the period as a home should reflect the individual character of the owner.

Louis XIV., however, and the artists whom he drew about him, were genuine Art-Protestants, with a definite ideal of science as minister to pleasure. The king en-

couraged the highest talent to develop and beautify the smallest details. He had 'views,' and he spared no cost nor pains to carry them out. He was triumphantly successful, as I hope to presently show; at least in the *mise en scène* for a 'garden' of girls.

A Louis Quatorze Room.

Of all known styles of decoration, that called Louis XIV. is perhaps, *at its best*, the most elegant and the most scientific, though it occurs in a downward career, like the most gorgeous sparkle of the rocket. It is voluptuous without being inane, and graceful without visible affectation (unlike what followed).

It is the style of all others which least bears unintelligent adoption, and which it is easiest to vulgarise: its scheme is far more subtle than it seems; hence the atrocious parody which the *nouveau-riche* has, and which the nineteenth-century Queen Anne was born to reform—by destruction.

Think of the delicate chairs which we still collect at sales of old fallen French houses, with their beaded ornament, as though some jewelled necklet were laid along the gentle curves, and their slight but firmly-set legs, fluted up such a graceful ascent as that of a jet of water from feet of small acanthus leaves. Then the wreath of small leaves and berries which is conventionalised into so graceful an ornament, dropping through the ring formed by flowers, that itself forms an open point or handle on the arch of the back—how pretty is each idea brought into play! and around the cushion which re-

ceives our shoulders a folded riband seems to run, itself bound down by crossing smaller ribands. How well-made are these chairs, though spring-seats were unknown! How well-seasoned was the wood whose joints have never gaped! The arm-chairs have a luxurious cushion, kept from slipping by a stuffed ridge or support around the seat. The arms are padded just where our elbows require it, not in a huge shapeless lump like a Christmas pudding dropped incontinently there (as in every modern stuffed arm-chair), but a *slight* pad, thin enough to obey the mild curve of the embrace the chair seems to suggest. None of the 'solicitous wrigglings' of to-day's device, especially of modern 'Louis XIV.'—hideous monsters, full of coarse, false mouldings and forgotten *raisons d'être*—but a quiet, tempting beckon, with a smile, 'I love you; come and let me make you comfortable, and wr[illegible] the you with the wee-est, delicatest flowers in the wor[illegible]!'

Molière surely noticed the peculiar attitude of these chairs when he made one of his *Précieuses Ridicules* say, 'Monsieur, ne soyez pas inexorable à ce fauteuil qui vous tend les bras il y'a un quart d'heure, contentez un peu l'envie qu'il a de vous embrasser!'

With sofas and chairs of such dainty description, wanting little save the scent to be crystallised banks of flowers, each one of them:—hand-carved, painted, gilt, and further graced with pale silk, or fine Gobelin, intrinsically works of art—the brilliant saloons of the *Grand Monarque*, '*Dieu donné*,' were ranged.

On the floors of shining parquetry redoubling the faint curves and angles above, lay silken mats and carpets

of rare web. On the ceilings paintings by the first masters contended for chief prize with beams delicately carved and gilt by artists nearly as great, that formed their frames—such ceilings as we see in Versailles, or in Venetian palaces. On the walls were tapestries defying paint; or if not tapestries, velvets and satins of noble design, parted in panels delicately moulded and gilt, and Parterre's and Watteau's pictures; or again, the Spanish stamped and wrought leathers with grounds of gold or silver toned down by pellucid varnish and enriched by flowers and arabesques in colour which pages of 'black and white' cannot do justice to. We hear of 'gauffered hides,' 'gold and silver on an orange ground, with the queen's cipher'—of orange mountings, gilded or silvered, on a violet ground—blue, sea-green, red and gold, black and silver for mourning hangings; and historic scenes, or religious, portraits, animals, and armadas were thus illuminated. When the raised leathers came in, stamped in high relief birds and foliage stood forth alive with colour, glorious.

The Garden in the House.

Never was such encouragement given to floral ornamentation. Gaston, Duc d'Orléans, established hothouses in the Luxembourg, and at Blois a true botanic garden, for the sole purpose of supplying the needle with sweet tints and forms. With a strange craving for nature in that vortex of art, the garden was brought indoors in a thousand ways. Flowers were rather interpreted than copied from nature, as is fit and right; they sprouted in

raised groups both on the garments of the courtly people, the sofas they lolled on and the walls they whispered by. The best artists were employed to paint, carve, broider, inlay, and engrave the rare flowers as they opened in due season, and to design from them the beautifully conventionalised wreaths which covered the sumptuous leathern walls, and which remain to us, here and there, the best result of this flower-worship; the finest of all 'backgrounds' for the supreme decoration of a room, humanity. I shall presently show that the scheme of a Louis XIV. room did not ignore the living folk.

As if gold and colour in profusion did not fully carry out the royal conceptions of brightness, mirrors were used for totally novel effects. Some of us don't like mirrors. Would-be teachers sneer at plate glass, and recommend us to cut them into little bits, or cover them with shelves for books and blue pots. Louis XIV. knew the value of glass. Lucas de Nehou, director of the glass factory near Cherbourg, received royal orders to excel the fine Venetian work, and he obeyed. That England already did so, we hear from Evelyn (1672), who saw at Greenwich 'glasse blown of finer mettal than that of Murano at Venice;' and at Lambeth 'huge vases of mettal as cleare, ponderous, and thick as chrystal, also looking-glasses far larger and better than any that come from Venice;' and Bishop Sprat, in his 'History of the Royal Society,' speaks of 'English *Glasse*, finer and more serviceable for *microscopes* and *telescopes*,' than any foreign glass. This was a little in advance of France.

Presently the mirrors were enlarged, and superadded to by sections of glass, and glass inlayings, forming

borders, pediments, pendants, attached by golden branches and hidden seams and delicate floral arabesques. I shall elsewhere speak of the paintings on mirrors.

Such luminous points of white light refreshed the eye amidst the storm of colour as a changing fountain does in some richly clad, glowing garden. They took, in fact, precisely that place in the scheme of colour. They reflected at unexpected angles the delicate wainscots, the lovely hangings, the tortoiseshell and silver cabinets, the voluptuous pictures, the slabs of porphyry and Florentine mosaic which covered the *consoles*, the whole wealth of gilded wood, bronze, and chasings, velvet coats, broidered trains, and women, most lovely of all.

Colour.

Here was wealth of ideas, carried out with true artistic discrimination: no sparsely-furnished cells, refuge of paucity of thought—bare cold green or grey apartments without so much as a glass to reflect and double a pretty face if anything so pleasing gets in by accident. All the resources of wealth were pressed into the service of pleasure and refinement—more here, less there, as they were wanted, and all shone out in rooms of excellent construction and architecture giving upon views such as we all remember at Fontainebleau and Versailles.

What a rebuke to our fear of colour and brightness! like a loud sweet song which drowns the tentative minor of an Æolian harp. And the ghostly figures in our mind's eye, that wander through those vast luxurious

saloons, were matches in brightness and softness and vivacity. A man in a modern evening dress sitting on an old Louis XIV. chair is an ungainly object, the harsh dull fabric and graceless lines ill befit so dainty a couch;

FIG. 31.—Doublet, about 1646, time of Louis Quatorze.

a woman in a stuff gown and a plaid shawl looks equally horrible. But people the glittering rooms with rainbow dames and damoiseaux, in coats of amaranth velvet, or yellow and silver, with muffs and swords, and fluttering canions of riband and *point d'Alençon* of fairy

lightness, trains of silk 'covered with more than a thousand yards of ribbon,' says Mme. D'Aulnoy, snow-white arms, bright eyes made brighter by patch and mask—and I think we get the most dazzling picture of civilised skill and knowledge of effect, based on Nature herself, that can be found in the world's history—not excepting old Rome.

But the decline of taste which Louis XIV. had been able to stem, or at least make pretty, with the aid of men of immense ability, progressed with double speed when the king grew old, and the court inconceivably corrupt, and Boule's successors ministered to the vitiated eye.

It is remarkable to look through the innumerable 'Gayetés' of Le Pautre, engraved about the middle of the seventeenth century, and see how no possible department of decoration was left unconsidered by the almost feverish industry of the artists so warmly encouraged. Le Pautre was but one of a host; he was pupil of Adam Phillippon, joiner and cabinet-maker and also designer: and he has left designs for buildings of all kinds, decorations without and within, of every sort: great vases in which invention seems at times delirious but always clever; carriages, alcoves, pulpits, trophies, mirrors, splendid ceilings; beds like shrines, and tents, and fonts; ornate galleys worthy of Cleopatra herself; suggestions for all kinds of workmen; gardens, fountains—he could not leave the very grass-plats alone, but must cover them with curious arabesques to be carried out in colour, vegetable or mineral. This elaborate completeness of conception gave no doubt a totally

novel and constantly adaptable interest to constructions of all sorts, and we can understand how many enthusiasts may have thought they were cultivating the beautiful when they were only making artificiality a science.

A Scientific Background.

Now, a word about the crowning grace in a decorated room—the living inmates.

The scheme of colour perfected under Louis XIV. was most ingenious and unlike any previously attained by art. In a room completely furnished and inhabited, the human figures must have provided the exact colophon or foreground which human figures should do; brilliant in dress and ornaments, alive with French vivacity of gesture. Brilliant as was the background of walls and furniture, the high polish which then became the fashion must have softened all the edges of coloured wood or dark, and broken up the plane surfaces themselves by the reflections of passing objects; thus in certain lights, the most strongly-tinted furniture must have receded and faded into an indefinite glow, like a nebulous atmosphere of colour about the main figures, themselves alone opaque. Sharp points of colour such as sunlit edges of brass mounts or gilt cupids would light up here and there the nebulous glow created, and form a background as soft and forgetful of hard lines as any Carlo Dolci picture—as any courtly, selfish life. In fact, it had the very texture of a picture, and many of these disjointed brazen mounts were but as last touches of a skilful brush, enunciating the corners and projecting

parts of curves, and they differed on this side and that, as do freehand touches. The chief difference between painting before and after the Renascence, is the practised softness of edges. Again, the broad shadows practised by Renascence painters, and the bold contrasts of light and shade, were attained by the curves in polished surfaces of furniture. It is impossible to believe that French culture should have been unconscious of such physical effects and their importance. It was all cal-

FIG. 35.—Snuff-box, Louis Quinze ornament.

culated elaborately, and daintily carried out; and such bewildering effects of cross-reflections and broken colour may be examined in any room with polished floor and polished furniture, plenty of mirrors and a richly coloured ceiling. How opposed to the hard—yes, and *honest*—effect in a mediæval room before varnish was invented! an effect which is traceable in mediæval pictures which Renascence admirers find so 'hard.'

Not that the value of 'broken colour' has not been understood, and doubtless sought, in all the finest schools

of art; marqueterie of every kind, and enamels, like raised or incised carving, all attain the effect of broken colour by one means or another; for unbroken colour is always bad colour. Oriental colour, even when plain, is always unequal, for the same reason—the sensitive eye demands it. But on consideration, the motive of high polish in seventeenth-century decoration (which however has never, to my knowledge, been pointed out before) will be found to be the softened and indefinite effect producible; the clearer delineation of figures in the foreground, by reflections caused by them, which throw them forward, while throwing the background in arrear.

In painting a picture, these calculations always enter in; and the idea is worthy of French wit.

CHAPTER V.

The Decline (Louis Quinze).

JUST contemporary with our Queen Anne were the fashions in dress and furniture which by the natural process vulgarised the French king's grand conceptions; when skill and knowledge of effect had arrived at a point when they could go no farther, and thus began to decay. Hence our strict Jacobean habits merged into those which gradually came over the Channel and were much the reverse of strict; and the curious, and most ungainly, medley of Puritan starch and French levity represented in English costume, I have described briefly under 'Queen Anne Dress.'

The floral decoration which we particularly connect with Louis XIV.'s time—an airy, easy adaptation of garden images to every purpose—was carried presently to a vexing extreme. Under Louis XV. there was no end to the eccentricities of the endive foliage and the anthemion. In the hands of the first masters, endive like acanthus could be moderate and therefore graceful;

but when freedom of handling was degraded into licence, every pupil exaggerating (which means diminishing) the charms made popular by his master, what was the result?

A caricature. Not a line was allowed to be straight; forms were more and more disguised to suit the fretful appetite for novelty, and to create perspectives for the

Fig. 56.—Clock, Louis Quinze ornament.

eye. The chiffonier and cabinet bulged, squatted, shrank, in curves so unexpected and unnatural that they seemed positively to wriggle. These caprices weakened the construction, and drawers which had not a straight line anywhere left cavities of waste space that had to be concealed or excused by additional useless ornament.

All meaning was sacrificed to effect, as in the clock here reproduced—pretty at first sight, but on examination ridiculous. Parallel sides were no longer tolerated, and the furniture became tiresome in its silly straining after false effects. The panels looked moist and clammy with deceptive grapes and cherries in Florentine *pietra dura*, which jutted forth from the ground. The mirror-frames whirled in meaningless curves, slight relief changed to immoderate projections that wearied the eye with shadows and lights; the strange beasts and faces that peeped from every leaf or tendril meant no longer rich fancy, but delirium.

The best of a straight line is that you cannot vulgarise it. It may be ever so uninteresting, it cannot sin in itself. But a curved line may be vulgarised *ad libitum*; there is no end to the contortions it may be driven to, and it sickens us by its antics while the straight line is simply forgotten.

Similarly, colour was abused in this reign by the same process of vitiation of the eye and craving for novelty. Tortoiseshell was stained blue and green and red before it took its place among the costly incrustations. The Gobelin tapestry became so brilliantly naturalistic that the hangings and *portières* formed a breach in the wall contrary to all propriety in art, and emblems and trophies were confusingly mixed up with visions of farmyard life or mythical scenes. Painting was added to the crowded feud between needle-work, jewel-work, and marqueterie, and even Caffieri's clever puncheon hardly redeemed the florid vulgarity of cabinets, clocks, tables, wherein every effect being

claimed at once, no really powerful effect was gained anywhere.

Presently a reaction seized the frantic ornament, and under Madame de Pompadour, who, with all her crimes, was a capital patroness of art, the endive was pruned, the festoons of flowers and fruit reduced to some sort of discipline, the colours of marqueterie and their designs modified, or at least a choice was offered by the trade, between tenderness and violence.

In England, where the luxury of Paris was mimicked under Charles II., we learn from Evelyn's description of the dressing-room of Madlle. Querouaille, Duchess of Portsmouth, what wealth had long commanded. 'That which engaged my curiosity,' he says, 'was the rich and splendid furniture of this woman's apartment, now twice or thrice pulled down and rebuilt to satisfie her prodigal and expensive pleasures, whilst her Majesty's does not exceede some gentlemen's ladies in furniture and accommodation. Here I saw the new fabriq of French tapissry, for designe, tendernesse of worke, and incomparable imitation of the best paintings, beyond anything I had ever beheld. Some pieces had Versailles, St. Germain's, and other palaces of the French king with huntings, figures, and landskips, exotiq fowls, and all to the life rarely don.

'Then for Japan cabinets, screenes, pendule clocks, great vases of wrought plate, tables, stands, chimney-furniture, sconces, branches, braseras, &c., all of massive silver, and out of number, besides some of Her Majesty's best paintings.'

Lacquer and Porcelain.

Evelyn's allusion to Mr. Bohun who used Japan screens for wainscoting has been quoted: and about that time, in Paris at least, the new discovery, Japan lacquer, began to elbow aside the elaborate Boule marquetry with its rather oppressive glow. Collectors vied with each other in securing pieces for their *cabinets*, makers in devising new uses for the pieces. It was quiet, yet luminous, and quite novel. Among Boule's own works rare specimens of Oriental lacquer had already crept in, a very Gamelyn of furniture, one day to rise up and drive all before it. But the specimens were very few on account of the difficulties in reaching the Oriental markets. Presently it occurred to some one to panel ebony with small *plaques* of precious lacquer, and then the rage for lacquer became so hot that, regardless of cost, delay, destruction, China, Japan, India and Persia were ransacked for boxes, screens, trays, anything which could be broken up and 'adapted.'

Under Louis XV. the passion reached its height, for the pressure had been so great that incessant efforts had at last resulted in an ingenious substitute for gum lac. The family Martin (originally coach builders) had made themselves immortal by their imitation, the *vernis Martin*. Now everything was driven into the new groove, and here commenced the inundation of snuff-boxes, book-covers, carriage-panels, in fact everything that could be lacquered, made of *papier-mâché* stuck with mother-of-pearl chips, from which we so long have suffered.

Her Majesty the Queen, and various collectors such as Baron Gustave de Rothschild, possess fine specimens of *vernis Martin*. By-the-bye, Mr. Waring in his valuable book on 'Decorative Art,' speaks of this material as though it were the man's name. None of the Martins were christened 'Vernis.' Much of this manufacture was very perfect, and very brilliant. The black with raised gold ornaments was first copied: then the red lacquers were counterfeited; afterwards gaily illuminated panels were made by Le Sieur Simon Etienne Martin the younger, who obtained the exclusive right by a decree of Council on February 19, 1744, of manufacturing during twenty years lacquer work of every possible kind.

Madame de Pompadour encouraged the manufacture of *vernis Martin*. The Dauphin employed one of the Martins for seven years in lacquering his apartments at Versailles: and the sums of money paid by the French Royal Family for their works was truly vast.

There is no doubt that in certain circles there was a perfect frenzy for everything Oriental 150 years ago, as there is to some extent now. Whether the extraordinary popularity of the 'Arabian Nights' may be considered the cause, or the effect, or whether they had anything to do with it at all, I know not; but it is noteworthy that they were first translated from the Arabic in 1704—into French, of course, then English, and Moorish goods were as highly prized as everything else that came from the East.

The crowds of *magots* which nodded on every shelf with their restless mock-gaiety, so that no room was

FIG. 37.—Lacquer cabinet.

complete without *magots*, were kept in countenance by the Indian and Japan lacquer beneath and above them. And when fine ladies had filled their houses with such productions there remained but one step from intelligent appreciation to folly. For a time nothing was tolerated that was *not* Oriental.

Orientalism in Dress.

As I have ever said, people's dwellings and their clothing follow a like bent, much as cynics sneer at the thought of 'dressing up to one's furniture;' and as all outward decoration is symbolical of the inner man, so clothing, and furniture which is a kind of clothing, are highly significant. Naturally, therefore, the inhabitants of these orientalised rooms began to make themselves as similar as possible to the background they prized, as the flat-fish forces itself to resemble the sea bottom, though for a different reason. Ladies wore nothing but Indian muslins and chintzes, nainsook, and nankeen. In fact such was the demand, to the detriment of English trade it was thought, that in 1700 an Act of Parliament had been passed to prohibit their introduction; but Acts of Parliament cannot cure 'the madness of the people,' and we all know what a mighty and organised trade was smuggling in the last century. These Asiatic goods soon had to be made at home to supply the market, hence calico-printing, in imitation of Indian cottons, was invented in 1764, British muslin in 1774. The ever-popular 'shawl pattern' was of course derived from India; turbans became common, with the true upstart

plume, however absurd in England, and were worn even at dinner with a shawl swathed round the waist. Shawls became a passion with fair collectors: to put on a shawl well was a science, and a 'shawl-dance,' in which the eccentric Madame de Krüdener among others excelled, became as much the rage as private theatricals have since been. Madame de Staël said of it: 'Never have grace and beauty produced a more extraordinary effect

Fig. 58.—Ornament upon Denon's Greek vase.

on a numerous assembly. This foreign dance has a charm of which nothing that we have seen can give a fair idea: it is a thoroughly Asiatic mixture of indolence and vivacity, of sadness and mirth.' In this dramatic dance of course an Indian shawl played an important part in the attitudes of the dancer, who strove to give her figure 'the antique cast' as well as the oriental.

But all the developments of the prevailing fashion were not so graceful as this. Sir Joshua Reynolds shows

us that some ladies went so far as to adopt the Turkish tunic and trousers, and the gayest Eastern silks were obtained and copied. The dancing girl in swaying arched-out skirts (a common Indian pattern, Benares brass is full of such figures) actually came to life in the ridiculous Georgian hoop, caught up indecently enough on either side. I have seen Chelsea figures so costumed, exhibiting the brief under-petticoat quite candidly

Fig. 30.—Georgian hoop, derived from Oriental source (1730).

to a side view, and it is inscrutable what people found beautiful in that. Meanwhile architecture itself followed the bent, and under Sir William Chambers, Chinese gardens, pagodas, and Turkish bowers punished the mild English lawns. Chambers published a 'Dissertation on Oriental Gardening,' and George IV. greatly encouraged the grotesque productions of this architect. The Pavilion at Brighton remains an example.

To help supply the eager market the Dutch Delft

factories poured forth shoals of mock nankeen china, hawthorn and mayflower pots, services of Chinese device such as 'willow pattern,' copied from the Celestials down to the very marks. Old Lowestoft and Leeds commenced forging Oriental ware with wondrous fidelity. Every cupboard, every clock, was plastered with poor copies of Oriental scrolls, pagodas, and patchy colouring. Pug dogs were largely imported from Asia and reproduced in pottery as they died. Monkeys and parrots became fashionable, being Indian; so did Negro servants, yclept Cyrus, Pompey, and Mahomet; and idle ladies employed themselves in smearing vases with a kind of paste in raised patterns, simulating more or less correctly Oriental enamels. Astonishing monsters, pink cats, green dogs, red lions, such as Minton now copies, date from this time, and gave their names to many inns and streets.

This rage may be dated in France a little before this country took it up, for we are always a little behindhand in appreciation and in encouragement of manufactures—but when we once begin we do it thoroughly.

It was the dregs of that blind admiration for Oriental colouring with no understanding of its principles, which clothed Englishwomen in such horrible mixtures at the beginning of the present century, a fault which Frenchwomen with their better natural taste, and complexions which repudiate garish hues, were unlikely to fall into. Hence England soon won an unenviable celebrity for never knowing 'how to dress,' that is, never studying how to combine forms and tints; but our women were then thoroughly tired of the grave fashions of the imitation

Greeks, and strove to fit the severe tone of thought to enjoyable colours which their clear skins made possible —hence such toilettes as we may quote from a book fifty or sixty years old. 'What do we see first? a fancy-straw bonnet, lined and trimmed with rose colour, an orange shawl, and a lilac muslin dress. The next wears a blue bonnet, lilac *visite*, and a pink dress. Now we follow a lady in a cool green muslin dress, a white shawl chequered with peach-blossom and green, the bonnet peach blossom. Here, our companion exclaimed, is an exception to your rule; it is impossible that two colours could be better contrasted or harmonised. Stay, we replied, let us see the lady's face, and ascertain whether the same harmony is preserved throughout the costume. We accordingly quickened our paces, passed the lady, looked in her face, and saw—bright amber-coloured bows inside her lilac bonnet and broad strings of yellow ribbons with a red stripe!'

Meanwhile, taste was changing in Paris, and we will cross the Channel to examine the new development of art.

A Louis Seize Room.

The prevailing fashion under Marie Antoinette was refinement, *avant tout*, and if at times this redeemed style was open to the charge of affectation or insipidity, we must not be too censorious considering what preceded and what followed it.

After the lacquer craze, came the craze for porcelain. Louis Quinze had patriotically founded and

made fashionable the porcelain manufactory of France, and even in his time porcelain had been put to novel use, but it was in the succeeding reign that the rage for it culminated, when the manufacture was in perfection and taste had overleapt the point of good sense.

Fig. 101.—Costume, time of Louis Seize (from a caricature, circ. 1786, entitled 'Modern elegance.')

Sèvres *plaques* and Wedgwood cameos were the new 'gems' promoted to great honour; they were inserted in tables and cabinets, mounted in the most delicately chiselled brass or even gold, like personal ornaments,

which last actually existed, and sat on every belle's fingers or white throat.

The Sèvres *plaques* were a little in advance of the Wedgwood, which were difficult to procure out of England before 1790. Choice wavered between the glaze of the one and the morbidezza of the other. The tender Wedgwood colouring is delicate, but very cold; the Sèvres is delicate without coldness, but it is too often inane. A whole drawing-room, however, furnished in Sèvres china—tables, chandeliers, vases, statuettes—and Sèvres colouring, presents a singularly elegant *ensemble*, which harmonises very sweetly with the grace of a refined and pretty presiding genius.

Figure to yourself, reader, such a room, shortly after the invention of the soft-paste porcelain; such a room as one of the boudoirs at Fontainebleau or Versailles, with its fine proportions, tall doors opening in the middle, white marble mantelpieces, and windows giving on carefully tended views. The room is an artificial garden. Every shelf that can bear a pot is laden with vases, whereon the *rose Pompadour*, the *bleu turquoise* and *bleu de roi*, the pale green called *vert pomme*, the soft *jonquille* and the *œil de perdrix* follow one another like notes of a song written in opal tints of fruit and flower and bird.

Whole beds of flowers, made of porcelain (a special feature of the time), modelled and coloured, and—last extravagance!—perfumed *au naturel*, seem to grow and bloom on this side and that. Flowers of ormolu enclose calices for candles, and mirrors double the bouquets. Bronze stems, supporting foliage and dew-drops of rock

crystal, form the chandeliers and girandoles which the utmost care and deftness can hardly keep clean. Here is a table of the new 'mahogany' wood, that might be the queen's own, around which *plaques* of fragile porcelain are set amid bas-reliefs of metal of the utmost fineness. The legs (can we call them by so coarse a name?) are

Fig. 41.—Table, time of Louis Seize.

slight but elegantly proportioned, the small feet check with concentric rings the slim spirals just stout enough to bear the weight of the top—Japan lacquer framed in lace-like bronze, all too delicate to burden with anything heavier than a Sèvres snuff-box—or one Sèvres teacup—and the gently curving tray beneath, enclosing the

golden semblance of a wicker basket. The classic element is present in the dainty bas-reliefs and the well-chased busts at the corners, but the result is not classic, it is only playing amorously at classicism. How different is this cleverness from the earlier French translations from the *grand antique*! how much more trivial than the robust science of the sixteenth century! Here is a clock, of course porcelain and gold, with the tenderest green and pink playing into each other; a Corinthian pillar supports an urn wreathed with roses, and two delicately modelled nudities support both. Everybody is debilitated, and requires support, but it should be polite, not obtrusive—in fact the hands need not touch, as long as they are ready. There hangs a picture of the Watteau school, pastoral, insipid, with its gentle insinuation; *latet anguis in herbâ*, however well-kempt the turf. An *escritoire* shows us a silver inkstand of the inevitable pattern, festoons of flowers and ribbons, but calm, not whirling like those in Louis XV.'s time. The *escritoire* wears similar ornaments, and its ormolu caryatides are works of firstrate skill. Here is a tazza,[1] the basin painted outside in broad rays of *bleu de roi* and turquoise, inside with loves of surpassing grace that float on clouds and wreaths of roses, charmingly tinted; the whole mounted in minutely chiselled ormolu, describing a garland of tiny grapes and blossoms, sustained by boys with fishes' tails, half syrens, half cupids, modelled with ability and knowledge which would shame our silversmiths.

The frames of the porcelain-trimmed chairs and

[1] In the author's possession.

sofas are no longer gold as in the previous reign. White paint, varnished and relieved by faint lines of lilac or blue in the delicate moulding, echo, like the faint coloured carpet and silken walls, the colours of the china that encases everything, and for which the furniture has become a mere mount. All things revolve around this mock simple fashion, the dainty flutings, amorous trophies, and draped urns recalling the antique, piece, meal. Truly, here is lavishness and fastidiousness *in excelsis*; truly, 'good taste' is in its glory—but it is a glory of clay. In all this, says a clever French writer, 'we read a polished gallantry, and see the last smile of that society about to disappear in storm and bloodshed.'

Some suppose that the cabinets, and vases of scented flowers were wholly made and completed in the Sèvres manufactory when a special staff of experienced workmen were retained to prepare them for royal presents. A visit to Sèvres to see the process of making even a small vase with the fine snow-white clay will give us some idea of the costliness of a fashion which covered, not only the court beauties but the chairs they sat on, with porcelain pictures painted by acknowledged artists in the severely protected royal manufactory:—nay, their very carriages were incrusted with them. There was some reason then for agonies of fear for the panels, such as some ladies suffer in a new glossy carriage. Mme. Dubarry mentions the equipage of Mme. Beauprè:—'Nous la vîmes paraître dans une voiture dont les panneaux étaient en porcelaine ornée de peintures délicieuses, les encadrements en cuivre surdoré.' The subjects of the paintings were endless;

some mythological, some from 'Don Quixote' and La Fontaine's fables: 'Temptation of St. Anthony,' 'Le Triomphe de la Beauté,' 'La Baigneuse aux roseaux,' and such like, the names of the artists being quoted.

A Whited Sepulchre.

In England the 'mode' was less extravagant, and ever-cheapening marqueterie ultimately became far more common than painted white wood; but such was the taste which linked Louis Quinze exuberance with the Empire asceticism, and which accompanied the mock-pastoral fashions of milkmaid-hats and aprons, golden crooks, Corydons and Chloes, which did not only exist in Mme. D'Aulnoy's stories, but were seen in society. The faint colouring of porcelain entered into dress, which bore the same stamp of would-be simplicity and innocence. Baby patterns, lilac dotted muslins, thin faint silks and nainsooks marked the inevitable reaction from the previous brilliance and heat of colour, and heralded in the pseudo-classic parodies: but the change had as yet no moral significance—vice had become decent perhaps, but was not yet virtue.

There is grace in the idealism of this time, like an elegant drama, which made as though the art-reformation signified cleansed conditions; but we are not taken in by it, whether the eighteenth-century people were or were not. They 'made believe very much,' like Dickens's Marchioness—so much that they may have come to mistake the shadow for the substance, and really forgot that whilst they were mincing about rooms gay as

a garden with flowers more fragile than their prototypes, whilst they were sleeping like Mme. Recamier in beds hung with the rarest Point d'Alençon, and so tired of idleness that dolls had to be made and gests stripped to furnish gold lace for their craze for *untwisting*[1]—whilst one-half of France was lapped in reckless luxury, the other half was starving.

The shepherds and shepherdesses in delicate rainbow garb meant no real simplicity and rural innocence: affectation is most corrupt and self-conscious when it begins to simulate purity with such strenuous efforts. The sweet Greuze heads which smiled down on the shepherds implied no fact of human experience, hardly even an attainable ideal, but a cynical admission that childhood itself was not what it seemed. It matters not: let us eat and drink, to-morrow we die, was the moral of it all. Why else, how else, could Greuze have painted *La Cruche Cassée*? Never was a face more sweet, more mystic, but Greuze preached no ideal state, no appeal to worth, to love or to pity, but wrought in a mood which strikes an English mind like a sick fancy, none the healthier for being a pretty one, at any rate peculiarly French: the 'pearl' in the fish.

[1] Untwisting—the fashionable 'rage,' during which ladies scarcely stirred without two little work-bags, one filled with gold fringes, tassels, or any golden trumpery they could obtain, the other to contain the gold they unravelled, which they sold to the Jews. 'The Duc de Coigny one night appeared in a new and most expensive coat; suddenly a lady in the company remarked that its gold bindings would be excellent for untwisting. In an instant he was surrounded; in short, in a few moments the coat was stripped of its lace, its galloons, its tassels, its fringes.'—*Illuminated Book of Needlework*, p. 388.

The earthquake which should have come in Louis Quinze's time, overwhelmed Louis Seize and Marie Antoinette. It is difficult to read of the miseries of the downtrodden peasants without feeling that even the bloody Revolution was a divine retribution for offences that blackened earth: it is difficult to read of the meanness of cruelty which tortured the Royal Family in their misfortunes without indignantly realising that the blow fell on the wrong people. Debarred from pen and ink, toilet necessaries, even the scissors and knitting needles which might have beguiled the weary prison hours, the Capets were crowned martyrs by their sufferings. 'At this time the king's coat became ragged, and as the Princess Elizabeth his sister was mending it, as she had no scissors the king observed that she had to bite off the thread with her teeth. "What a reverse!" said the king, looking tenderly upon her, "you were in want of nothing at your pretty house at Montreuil." "Ah! brother," she replied, "can I feel regret of any kind while I share your misfortunes?"'

Marqueterie.

I cannot close my survey of this luxurious period without a few words on the marqueterie which was brought to such perfection after Louis Quatorze, and which is now so often the favourite pursuit of collectors. This kind of furniture is obstinately called 'Queen Anne,' like most other things nowadays; and people are mostly surprised when told that their very elegant drawing- and bed-rooms are 'Louis Seize.'

Strong as is my preference for Gothic, & very early Renascence furniture and decoration, because of its robuster excellence, I must own that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries furniture reached its acme; never before were rich fancy, unsurpassed skill of hand, and knowledge of effect pressed so lavishly into the service of beds, cabinets and wall-coverings as I showed in 'a Louis Quatorze Room.' Furniture cannot go farther than certain exquisite ebony constructions in the Cluny Museum at Paris, carved from one end to the other, mounted in silver, set with precious stones, and tiny bas-reliefs still more precious. Nay, furniture ought not to go so far, since such ornamentation unfits it for its purpose, and makes it like a *genre* picture, merely a toy, not meant to be handled.

Nos. 601, 603, 594[1] and 592 in the above museum are examples of what cabinets can be, and should not be. They are the very *hetæræ* of furniture. The detail is exquisite, the *ensemble* seen from afar disappointing, from the darkness of the wood; as for their utility, it must always have been *nil*, like that of the 'white elephants' of old.

[1] Ebony cabinet (seventeenth century), No. 594, Cluny Museum; about 5½ feet high, projecting from the wall about 2 feet. Designs such as Benvenuto Cellini's fill the tiny panels on the face, all in low relief; the frieze however is adorned with ebony figures completely raised from the ground, like dolls fastened to it. Architectural ornaments occur at the sides of the cabinet, such as Corinthian columns with gilt capitals. Ivory reliefs are inserted in places; and in the *lower part* Limoges enamel pictures are set at each end, suggesting the query, must not this cabinet have been mounted on a pedestal, to bring these delicate enamels level with the eye? It has been impaired by the additions made to it by Fairvet, to which noted *ébéniste* Lord Nelson sent it from Spain to be put in order.

But good marqueterie has a reasonable, smooth surface; and supplies a proper decorative background, like tapestry, Spanish leather, carved oak (not blackened), or any other material which has the self-tint mottled or variegated by one means or another, and thus offers a considerable space of soft quiet 'broken colour' when viewed from a distance, not a plain single tint. It is this shrewd mingling of many colours into a soft bloomy whole, which renders fine Oriental decorative work at once so interesting and so 'becoming' to whatever is brought near it. All true decorators have felt it. Boule felt it, and hence devised the ingenious combination of tortoiseshell and other substances which we know as common in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The designers of the fine Spanish leather and the best kind of tapestry felt it; whilst those who made such wall-coverings so brilliant as to aim at deception, at a later time, missed the secret of good decorative work. Morris felt it when he designed his well-known pomegranate paper. Marqueterie such as the old piece spoken of at page 11 is admirable; and eighteenth century marqueteries often very good now, because its once brilliant hues have faded so as to represent nearly the real unstained woods which at first were used before taste had become vitiated. It presents a broad surface of broken brownish colour, which is a capital background when not injured by extravagance of form.

The fortunate possessors of Louis Quatorze marqueterie, or pieces by Riesener, David Roentgen, and other well-known makers French and German, have it in their

power to arrange very beautiful rooms, whether planned after the dainty elegance of the Louis Seize time, or after the somewhat broader and richer manner of an earlier date, provided these good people do not destroy the soft chequered colour of the furniture by pallid walls which they fondly call 'Queen Anne,' or contradict the voluptuous curves inseparable from the fashions of the three Louis's, by the strict angles of 'Empire' objects, which, however neatly fluted, polished or inlaid, have a character pronounced enough to be quite out of harmony with works of any other period.

Artists who Emancipated Art.

Louis Quatorze appears to have been the first to recognise in a substantial manner the fact that if we want firstrate art in our carpets, furniture, plate, &c., we must employ firstrate artists, and make it worth their while to give thoughtful study to such a branch of design. Thus the names of the great king's art-attachés have come honourably down to us alongside Italian names such as Benvenuto Cellini's. Among them are Lebrun; Mignard; André-Charles Boule, ciseleur et doreur du roi, who carried to their consummation and created a school; Claude Ballin the goldsmith; Philippe Poitou, who imitated Boule, and injured his model with the best intentions, when the king was growing old.

Many honourable names *temp.* Louis Quinze, encouraged by royal bounty, are familiar. Meissonier, who carried endive and *rocailles* to the last exaggeration;

Caffieri, sprung from a race of distinguished sculptors and a sculptor himself, whose bronze work adorns furniture in the possession of Sir Richard Wallace and Baron G. de Rothschild; his rival, Crescent, Martincourt and his more famous pupil Gouthiere, chaser and gilder to Louis Seize, and Galien, *fondeur-ciseleur*, who made iron railings and regal fire-places; and many more, who, like Quentin Matsys raised the baser metals to the rank of gems by their exquis delicacy of treatment and knowledge of design; a Cl n, who worked in terra-cotta; Renaud snuff-boxes to David, whose influe quar of t teenth century was m

We have been chie referring to Fr France is the immediat urce of most shions, and in France far m substantial pa ge was afforded by royalty to t production of art fo domestic use. Italy, still wealth r in grea igners tha France, has had no great *direc* ffect on ish art, be ause her influence has for the most part d through France, our nearest neighbour. Celli ticcio, a d others, resided in France, warmly enc d by royalty, and no doubt lent an Italian bre grandeur to the French Renascence school. El taking example by her father and Francis I., and uently Charles I., supported art by inviting over and Italian artists and encouraging the buds ive talent; but English artists of real calibre eldom devoted their talents to anything so base ome surround-ings, though they be royal. Since nascence fairly

set in, artists have not poached on the architects' manor, while architects have left furniture to artisans—not all-round men like mediæval artisans—and the home has been left out in the cold as a 'No man's land.' Grinling Gibbons is the sole example of an indigenous growth of talent, fairly successful in founding a school of carvers, and fairly paid; as will be clear on comparing English with the carefully kept German, French, Flemish, or Italian lists of accomplished and talented art-workmen.

Flaxman worked for [illegible]gwood, and Wedgwood potter to Her Ma[illegible] Queen, and could afford up the Duche[illegible]nd's bids for the Barvase [illegible] out. Flaxman was not re[illegible]ed royalty in the [illegible]siness, and it is curious to compare the payments of Josiah Wedgwood to John Flaxman for basreliefs of the Muses and Apollo, Bacchus and Ariadne, &c., 10[illegible] 6d. apiece; portrait busts from 16s. to 42s. and the like—with the lavish payments in the reign of Louis XIV. by the Duke of Orleans for the merest *objets* for art-designers—flower-paintings by Robert [illegible]ures each, and afterwards *re-bought* for the Crow[illegible]

My list of art-[illegible]ners in England will show that in the eighteenth ce[illegible] we had a few names of note who may rank as de[illegible]rs, but the list is sadly meagre. Our architects w[illegible]minent; they decorated our streets, nevertheless we[illegible]t compare London with Rome and Florence, where [illegible] greatest artists spent glorious efforts on the outside [illegible]nside of the costly palazzi. Bacon modelled for Lam[illegible]h ware, while Flaxman designed

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had some foundation in real indigence. The *noblesse* (stript of their possessions) who escaped the guillotine fled to England and deluged us with refined, heart-broken *émigrés*, who thankfully stooped to tuition for their daily bread. A very few chairs ranged in frigid symmetry supply the wants of people both poor and pre-occupied; cartloads of Sèvres and gilded shepherdesses naturally go 'up the spout'; and if they care to have an ornament or two as days grow brighter, it will be a little grey bit of Wedgwood to make tea in, or a little drab bit of Chelsea, or a whitish patch of Leeds ware; and neither recalls Eros or Aphrodite in its pallid bas-relief, but Pallas or Nemesis. Black horsehair is more suitable to such a room than velvet or Gobelin work. It wears well, and gives no trouble. One little mirror with Jove's eagle aloft is also in character; we don't want to look at ourselves now; besides, our hair is grizzled and our cheeks sunken with tears and watching and mean food, and if we do catch sight of ourselves we prefer the image blurred, distorted out of recollection.

A convex, or worse, *concave*, mirror becomes absolutely sympathetic. Hard are the seats, for life is hard; hard are the pierced strapwork backs, made by Heppelwhite; the walls are covered with a thin ugly paper or white-washed, and the books we need are together in the neat, panel bookcase that also holds our wardrobe. Bureau and linen chest are also combined—that needs less room. Everything has a rectangular way with it—that means straightforwardness. Everything looks naked—that means candour. A map on the wall, the globes in the window, a wooden stool or two for the children, with a slit for the

hand; the tea-caddy, the well-used work-box, and the tall corner-clock with its severe round face and classic pediment slightly spatterdashed with mock Chinese sketches—here is our survey of a regular 'Empire' room in England. A lithograph of a close-capped mother teaching her child to pray, and the black paper profiles of our lost relations (a plain 'honest' remembrance of them as they sat in our light, as usual—no fulsome flatteries to wake criticism or vanity)—completes the inventory. It is simple; is it beautiful? ah! that word has not so much meaning now—we forget whether these things can be called beautiful; the canons of taste were all banished—lost—guillotined perhaps, a few years ago. We are very grave strict people. The father does not like to see the children stoop; that means weakness, which must be checked. The mother does not like her girls to enter the room without gloves; that is too familiar; and if there was a hole in one—— Ah!

Most of us who have had oldfashioned relations or friends in childhood, can remember the curious stigma attached to the words 'proud,' 'vain,' 'selfish,' 'affected.' Such terms meant much more to them than they do to us, the spirit of the times was so severe, emulating classic patriotism, primitive candour. To say a woman was vain implied a real fault of heart, not mere consciousness of beauty; to say she was affected was to impugn both her sincerity and her taste. Even in Miss Austen's novels we feel the influence; we get no hint of a heroine's face; but we are told she was remarkable for a 'candid' mind, for good-sense, and a disposition so—decorous as to be positively arctic. Duty, not enjoyment,

was the aim of life. We constantly find people approved for being 'candid,' which probably meant sincere, well-mannered. We never hear that anyone is 'unselfish,' the antithesis called up is too violent. Marianne[1] admits that her lover is mercenary, dishonourable, profligate, and a dastard—but she defends him against the ghastly obloquy of selfishness! 'What is proper' was the bugbear, for it *had* been a question of life and death; and hardly any gaiety was held proper, as once it had been scarcely sane. Pride was a sin, for Egalité had taught us so in letters of blood.

When I hear people praise that time, so stony and so grim, from the harsh unbecoming costume which I have elsewhere criticised, down to every detail of awakened life, I am certain that they do not understand it. In France David and his partisans played at being Greek as children might play in a churchyard. But the false, stilted fashions that covered London and Paris with pseudo-classic conventionalities in the very worst taste became quite unmeaning in this climate; where the sapient architects built Greek temples with windows(!) of course nearly rectangular, terraces darkened by colonnades, changed every teakettle to a cinerary *urn*, even to the name, coalscuttles to sarcophagi, and beds to hearses. The 'propriety' which refused a tired child a chair with a back if the seat was over four inches wide, and discouraged all freedom of activity and self-forgetfulness or pleasure in everyone young and old, has much to answer for in the inherited delicacy of many of our girls and boys.

[1] Miss Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*.

Empire Dress and Imitation Grecks.

People often ask what I think of the costumes of the 'Empire,' and whether I consider that it will 'suit' such and such an one. If they had read one-half what has been written against the 'Imitation Grecks,' my readers, at least, would not ask such a question. Still, as examination and re-examination again and again of motives and habits is always serviceable, I may give here a brief description of (1st) what the Empire dress was; and (2nd) why it cannot suit anyone, if to 'suit' means to 'become,' and to become implies concealment of defect, accentuation of good points, and protection from the elements, for these are the three main requirements of clothing, and the Empire Dress fulfils none of them, nor ever did, or can: and (3rd) why this fashion, nevertheless, possesses a kind of *beauté du diable*, and does not misbecome a certain few.

The dress, like the furniture, of the Empire drew its inspiration from ancient Greek art, and, being a reaction from a totally different kind of costume in the last stages of decay, caught the fancy of the more educated classes under the artistic direction of a man of extraordinary originality and force of character, Jacques Louis David the French painter and politician. Indeed, the whole nation was then eager to reverse all that had been popular under the old *noblesse* and to cleanse both the inside and the outside of the platter, and warmly seconded the efforts of the artists to bring in a new school of art. Hence, manners and habits, furniture, china, plate,

jewellery, everything connected with æsthetics followed the new beat. In the dress reform which took place, greatly under David's direction, the adaptation of dress to the human shape was aimed at, instead of the adaptation of the human shape to dress, as in the previous fashions. Sated and disgusted by artificial forms and foul corruption and falsehood, the people cried out for honesty, simplicity, candour, cleanliness. Hoops, furbelows, and their attendant miseries disappeared. Extraneous aids, such as padding, patches, powder, buckram, and paint, were cast aside as unworthy the elevation of awakened minds. Scarcely Greek, perhaps, this—at any rate, 'out-Heroding Herod;' but the Greeks were sometimes misconceived by their admirers. However, this seemed to be the modern view of the permanent condition of ancient Greece, and they jumbled up Athens and Sparta somewhat, no doubt.

For the first time for many years, the feminine shape became normal; beautiful girls gained credit for beauties which had lately been buried under mountains of deception; the lovely complexion, hair, and limbs were acknowledged in due order of prominence, the attitudes and movements were nature's own, cleanliness suddenly became fashionable, and the toilet became scentless and took up very little time. The stiff brocades gave way to the humblest fabrics, white muslin or calico printed with unobtrusive dots, within reach of the whole 'Egalite.' Beautiful women simulated the philosophic candour of statues—the gown, very simply cut, in fact like a nightgown or long chemise, fell straight to the

feet, slightly longer behind than in front or at the sides. A small sash or girdle confined the folds of this loose gown somewhat above the waist, under the arms, often brought across the shoulder to keep it in position, and tied before or behind. For outdoor wear, a straight scarf (a faint and shrunken echo of the Greek himation) was cast about the shoulders. The sleeves were *nil*, for a shapely arm brooked no disguise. The small bonnet, helmet-shaped, offered a slight, very slight protection to the eyes; and the shoes without heels were rather high and tied with a small bow on the instep. By this violent reaction from the previous fashion, now called 'Queen Anne,' which was a regular domino, a graceful woman could appear graceful, a clean skin could assert itself as dark or fair—in fact, one could detect a pretty woman at a glance.

But—and this is noteworthy—one could also at a glance detect an ugly one. A word for the poor plain, or plainish, ones! The clinging low gown was unmerciful to an attenuated frame, still more so to one unduly robust. The large wide foot had no retreat; the thin red arm no shield; the skin spoilt by the long use of bad paints, the hair worn thin and broken by years of pulling over an unclean cushion large enough to weigh something considerable—these had neither pity nor palliation. If the beauties were beauteous then—the plain were likewise most deplorably and hopelessly unattractive. Woman in fact was severely, savagely Herself!

This was at the time of the Revolution, about 1793. Sir Joshua Reynolds has left us some very graceful

examples of what the beauties of his day looked like under the reformed costume before it became a servile plagiarism, and the promise was fairer than its fulfilment. A long plain gown, the severity of which was broken by an Indian scarf swathed about the waist, or falling from shoulder to foot—the somewhat undefined waist revealing the curves of a fine bust without aggressive display of charms, nor any attempt to deny their existence—the whole contour of the figure acknowledged, but softened by the natural fall of loose folds, which adapted themselves to every attitude gracefully enough when the attitudes were graceful. Gillray shows us the 'other side of the carpet'—his coarse caricatures give us the vulgar and ill-shapen gestures and frames, which naturally went side by side with beauty—he shows us how little chance had those many who are neither handsome nor ugly, of receiving fair credit for their small merits in a garb so painfully candid, and how the smallest approach to vulgarity or defect became nearly as disagreeable as its extreme!

Those were indeed sadly trying times; but so strong and stern was the national inclination then, suddenly roused out of supine subjection and *laissez-aller*, that beauty was less cared for than virtue; and, consequently, though the beauties were in clover, the plain ones had to be and were accepted as facts—very numerous and unmistakable facts—on the ground that beauty was of minor consequence *per se*. There is something fine in this semi-Spartan mood; but it was overstrained, and therefore false, like most reactions when too violent (the Puritan reaction is a similar instance); and whenever

beauty, as beauty, is undervalued, the loss is felt in all departments of life—progress in all refinement and culture is temporarily numbed and impeded, and in many ways the whole community suffers. It is quite terrible to see, now looking back, how the temper pervading the art reform in David's day, while producing many worthy contributions to art, seemed to kill or nip the vital energy of the sense of beauty, so that upon David's removal the *décadence* of that fashion was ugly as disease, hopeless like a fire unfed, and barren like ashes (which every *décadence* is not), containing within it no germ of new life, yet incapable of checking its own dismal decay. For the spirit of those days, whether in politics, art, or domestic life, was harsh, severe, self castigating in its desire for truth, simplicity, and justice, and it outlived too long its original *raison d'être*. The injury to trade, the injury to art, the injury to character even, which began with the bloody Revolution, can hardly be over-estimated, and much domestic suffering, especially amongst the young, sprang from the then begotten prejudices and straight-backedness. Things have only recently begun to recover the shock. Not, we must observe, that the spirit of the times was bad in its action on the times; but it was destructive of future advancement and new culture, like a moral stun.

But to our Empire Dress. Napoleon's reign may be said to have begun in 1800, and ended with his abdication in 1815, though his influence lasted much longer.

The *Imitation Greek* dress in its stage nearest to the Greek, its first stage and its best, was a little past for

the general public then. David's *habitués* were still excessively Greek, wearing the ancient garb, as we might put on a fancy dress at the house of a friend who would take it as a compliment—indeed, some of his pupils carried the silly affectation to such an extreme that David repudiated them as *des fous*, and *les éloigna de son école*. They were bringing the well-meant movement into disrepute. These Grecomaniacs called themselves the *Penseurs*. They adopted a Phrygian garb, met together upon fixed days, and at their *réunions* maintained absolute silence for a given time; then one spoke; he was followed by another, and so on; and whilst they were thus resuscitating the age of Pericles, according to their disordered fancy, they despised David as having 'looked back from the plough,' though they still admitted that he was a man of parts. How often do the disciples of new views outrun the master's meaning until he can have nothing in common with them!

The *Merveilleuses* sought to be conspicuous by devising bizarre raiment, sometimes by wearing Indian muslin chitonia over pink tights. But the general public—those who did not wish to be conspicuous, those who were not able to support such a primitive garb, either through weak health, shyness, artistic ignorance, or want of beauty—the general public who can only catch fragments of new fashions, and adapt them to the real needs of busy life—what had the array of this large class arrived at? They could not be troubled to arrange Greek folds. The short gown and shorter waist were general now, the one considerably above the ankle, the

other a formal 'made bodice,' gauged and fitted! The materials—muslin, cotton, or the thinnest silk and wool—were general also. The helmet-shaped bonnet had settled down into a popular form. Of course it had grown larger, and its worst features, by the natural law of fashion, vitiation of the eye, were all magnified. The shoes had shrunk into the most inadequate protection for the foot. The sleeves, unendurable quite short, now reached the wrists in a slight gigot form (this, later on, was more and more exaggerated; it commenced only with the slight rounding necessary to fit the shoulder joint). Petticoats, indispensable in winter, set the gown out in a wonderfully un-Greek manner; and the milliner, tired of plain skirts, which did not 'pay her,' and were truly very mean-looking and insignificant, had begun to decorate the extinguisher with horrible loops and festoons and lumps, after her time-honoured habit. People must have looked very like bottles with arms and feet then, and the topknot carried out the idea of the cork rather well: not that the topknot was not Greek, for it was Greek; but, with that burlesque of a gown, it gave just that touch of distasteful gingerliness, semi-knowing, but usually indicative of vacancy, which a cork half out always gives a bottle. From 1800 to 1840 variations of this costume were worn by all classes. This was the *décadence* of the *Imitation Greek* fashions; this was the true *Dress of the Empire*.

No doubt, when people praise the Empire dress, they often mean the original copy of the Greek dress, *not* the ordinary dress of the time of Napoleon I., which was the copied copy of some copy of the first copy, and the

last effect was of course as wide of the mark as the final whisper in the old game of 'Scandal.'

But there are people, strange to say, who really like the grotesque vagaries of the popular milliner of the Empire—they ignore, as she did, the Greek element—they like the vast coalscuttle bonnet with its steeple feathers, they like the bottle-shaped gown, they like the flat, unmerciful, useless shoes with vile bits of Persian ribbon on them, mis-called 'sandals'—they like the mean materials, they like the huge collar up to their ears and the vast festoons on the skirts—they like the harsh and ill-assorted colours—and what the *Merveilleuses* perpetrated in the way of combinations of colour only caricatures give one any just notion of!

And now I will show why these people like all this, and why I—who consider that costume the worst and the most trying that ever came in vogue, not excepting the Elizabethan, or the costume of Rufus's time, both grotesque, but having the merit of rich materials and careful decoration—can understand their liking it.

There is a quaintness about this dress which seems to suit some persons—chiefly young girls with unformed figures, but some grown women too. I have elsewhere remarked that lines in themselves have a language of their own, apart from the wearer![1] And this bottle-shaped costume bears me out. There is a precision, a brevity, a kind of abruptness in the lines of skirts, plaits, gaugings, &c., which has the same kind of charm at times to the eye as an abrupt or saucy answer in the mouth of a pretty woman sometimes has

[1] See *The Queen*, Nov. 6, 1879.

to the ear. *Il y a du caractère*, a Frenchman would say; and the unexpected relief from the sweet monotony of complaisance and natural yieldingness (whether the yieldingness be of a fabric to the figure, or of a mind to another mind) is pleasant, as a change, the more because it is not really beautiful. As we tire of all good and pleasant things, we love change, even to things worse, for a little while; but it is only that we may be able to turn back and enjoy the good things with renewed zest. And just as the saucy *quid pro quo* annoys on repetition, so the odd, quaint habits which deny or caricature the body annoy the eye after a brief while, and it returns refreshed to feel how much more satisfying and agreeable is the uncontorted frame, like the kindly, softened manners.

That word *kindly*, implying kinship, harmony, a natural tie or connection in its derivation, is not misapplied to dress. The Empire dress, like the rams-horn shoes or the wheel farthingale, was not *kindly* in the old sense of the word, for it denied the natural lines; and it was not *kind* in the new sense, for it exposed and drew attention to every defect.

I have seen young girls, and especially very little girls, who are naturally rather bottle-shaped, look charming in this Empire dress, when simply made, and when they are sufficiently nice-looking to be able to bear it. But, I repeat, little girls were not dressed thus during the Empire—this was the adult woman's dress. I have also seen elderly ladies with a certain Puritan dignity of carriage look very well in it; certain ladies, neither old nor very juvenile, with well-modelled graceful

figures and beautiful hair, become this dress—I do not say it ever becomes them; in these cases it is a question of being too pretty to be spoiled by one's garments. But, under such circumstances, one always thinks, how much more beautiful, how much more graceful and seductive, would all this be in a dress intrinsically good! In such a costume as that of Charles I.'s time, or Charles II.'s, or a fourteenth-century coat-hardie, or a George II. sacque, or a hundred elegant toilettes which may be found in the National Gallery—how much more picturesque a figure would she present who is charming even in the barren, bottle-shaped, insignificant costume of an Imitation Greek!

The very best form, well pruned and idealised, of the dress which most people mean when they speak of 'Empire' dress, is to be found in H. P. Briggs's picture of Juliet meeting her nurse and page, now in the National Gallery. But I cannot reiterate too often that this is *not* the true Empire dress, for satin was against their principles—and so was a train. The imitation Greeks began with a train in muslin; they may be said roughly to have ended with a train in silk and satin, but this was the ultimate revolt against cheapness and 'equality,' and speedily resolved itself into a new fashion, with long waist and somewhat full skirt. Juliet's dress will be seen to be excessively short in front, three or four inches from the ground: this was an ingenious device in about 1820 to display pretty feet without sacrificing length of folds, but it is not often really becoming, though, as before said, on a pretty woman everything is pretty. It was, as may be supposed, not long popular.

No costume is good which has no folds, or which diminishes height as a short dress and a low neck invariably do. Beautiful as are the lines of the normal female form, the lines of long folds really add new graces to it, as any artist who has greatly studied the frame will tell you. If a dress deprives the frame of its smoothest curves and its easiest attitudes, without adding any new grace, and without concealing structural defects, that dress is artistically bad and indefensible; and it seems to me that the Empire dress had all these faults. Therefore, while I like it for little girls, because it corresponds to the childish waistless figure and active habits —infinitely better than an attempt to import 'shape' by corset or belt—I can never think it becoming or suitable in any way to the mature figure, which is completely different from the child's, and whose every line and curve and attitude is in opposition to the lines of the costume.

There were other objections to the Empire dress which I have intentionally not dwelt upon, my concern being chiefly with beauty, and my conviction firm that women will risk every peril in order to be pretty. These were indelicacy (I have heard my grandmother say my grandfather would never allow her to wear a bodice less than four inches deep, an unfashionable depth which will speak for itself), and danger through colds and cancer (the latter was fearfully common, owing to women's efforts to obtain a small waist across the upper ribs—curious union of the old Norman love for 'a myddel smal,' with the classic indifference to it): objections which I do not think the artist David was in

any way responsible for when he forced on the pseudo-classic fashions.

The fashion of hair-dressing, in its best and most idealised form of that time, may be studied from certain portraits by Sir Thomas Lawrence, e.g., the Dowager Countess of Darnley (National Gallery, Room II.), who wears the knot high, but of no exaggerated size, nor of a disagreeable hardness and smoothness. Upon the first introduction of Greek modes a large number of hair fashions were adopted from the many statues, statuettes, and coins belonging to Greek territory, which show them clearly, and Greece could boast of very elaborate fashions of hair-dressing in her late time. But in England or France they were never joined to the indispensable mantle as in Greece, and they were most unsuitably combined with stays, long waists, pinched in by four inch belts, full petticoats, and mighty *gigot* sleeves (1830-40), which followed the short waists such as Juliet's mentioned above. Sir Thomas Lawrence shows us many heads, e.g. 'Psyche,' Mrs. Arbuthnot, &c., cropped and denuded of half their natural locks, under some mistaken idea that the Greeks wore little curls all over their heads like young children. There is no reason, as far as I see, to suppose that Greek women past young girlhood wore short hair.

If people will be wise, and go to the fountain head whence the art of the Empire drew its inspiration, they will find a beautiful costume, admitting of great variety in manner of arrangement, not great variety in texture, and no variety at all in cut. The lines of the long under-robe and of the peplum, the length and grace of

folds, depth of shadows, &c., are determined entirely by the human form and its changing attitudes; *ergo*, the form must be very candidly exhibited; and *ergo*, the charm of the dress depends upon the beauty and grace of the wearer.

This of course can shock no one in these days of eel-skin dresses, which are far more open to criticism than the well-folded Greek costume. Still, I do not see why the features of the form need be considered more shocking than the features of the face, and a reasonable mood on this subject is justly to be encouraged.

The peculiarity of the Greek dress was its full expression of the form beneath, and the ease with which it adapted itself to every attitude. The main feature of the dress was the himation (mantle or veil), which was, in fact, held to constitute the entire dress, while the under garment or garments only supplemented it, and were never worn without it, at least out of doors. In early Greece, to have walked without doors in the tunic without the himation would have been held a breach of propriety; to walk out in a thin himation, with *nothing beneath it at all*, was full dress. Therefore, the ancient Greek never exhibited that meagre aspect which characterised the 'Empire' or 'Imitation Greek;' and, therefore, the modern habit of copying portions of the Greek costume without due knowledge of the value and functions of each garment, and without understanding the costume as a *whole*, must always seem to those who have studied Attic manners a solecism of a most uncomfortable kind.

It is clear that so simple and filmy a garb as the

Greek would have concealed little, and only enhanced beauties which were already present, but certainly never supplied to any marked degree structural defect. How then did the Greeks, who so loved beauty, accustom themselves to such a garb? For there must have been ugly Greeks—Greeks too fat, Greeks too thin, Greeks old and young; yet the fashions did not change—the same dress served for all, and served them well.

Their minds were strong in philosophy and content. They were used to all sorts of figures; they did not attach excessive importance to the accidents of time and nature, since all ages of man had their merits and demerits, and all were true. They thought it was good to be beautiful, they thought it a sad misfortune—indeed, some sign of shame—to be ugly or ill-shapen; but they did not insist upon certain proportions in frame being always carried out, and as a rule they did not try to remedy nature's omissions. A thin person looked thin, face and figure corresponding, as a fat person looked fat, but not objectionably in either case, as the eye was carried along so many folds in the mantle that it had no need to dwell long enough to be annoyed upon the defects beneath. That constituted the merit and grandeur of the dress; it would really palliate harsh lines, but supply no false aids; and to the Greeks an imperfect figure was what a plain face is to us, no unusual sight, nor of vital consequence, but a fact—

'Tis true, 'tis pity—pity 'tis, 'tis true—

was the mood in which they viewed it as they passed on and forgot it.

But the average was probably higher in Greece than it is in England as to general build and robustness. The Greeks were a fine race, and the Saxons are a fine race; but in England the breed is so mixed that there are as many slight, weakly frames as strong and handsome ones, and the Greek dress would be much less merciful to the former than almost any other costume.

One thing is noticeable in England, that some persons by nature are far longer or shorter waisted than others: many too are of an erratic build. You will find people having fat arms but thin legs, or people with very skinny throats yet with a full bust or *vice versâ*. The types almost seem to have got confused, as if the moulds had been broken up and put together wrong. In such cases it would be a great pity not to supplement and aid extraneously defects which might spoil the *tout ensemble* otherwise really handsome and pleasing, but without reversing the features of the type. Now, how can one coat fit everyone? It cannot, and we can have no national costume in our country, least of all can we satisfactorily employ the Greek one. It is because we cannot—because our needs are too conflicting and our types too numerous—that the Greek costume, when tried in England and France, has invariably degenerated into some hideous monstrosity. In the sixteenth century we see what it came to in Elizabeth's state dress; in the nineteenth we see in such old-fashioned books as the 'Ladies Magazine,' 'La Belle Assemblée,' 'World of Fashion,' &c., which I pray my readers to examine in the British Museum. It is radically unsuited, in its pure, proud, original form, to this country; and it is a costume

that cannot be taken 'by halves,' for the simple reason that as soon as it is 'improved upon' or 'adapted,' it ceases to be itself.

I am, in fine, perfectly assured that, in spite of these facts, as facts they are, no one who is resolved to wear the Empire dress, and to think it 'suits' her, will be deterred by advice or threats. People love asking for advice; they receive it gratefully, and as one who has found a treasure; but in her heart every woman is convinced that she knows better than anyone else on most subjects, and especially on dress, and the less she has studied the surer she feels! I can only adjure those who really care for what is beautiful not to carry on the *beauté du diable* experiment too long at a time. There is a piquancy in the costume, but it is a piquancy that must be handled wisely—like a crab.

Third Book

General Applications

CHAPTER I.

ON PLACE AND TONE.

Arrangement of the Room.

THE kind of room you have to decorate is of more importance than many people suppose. A well proportioned room with handsome, not obstrusive, cornices, really well designed mantel-shelves, and walls of the right height in proportion to their length, certainly lends importance to every object brought into it. A poorly proportioned room,—such as we find in the majority of suburban residences, built by some dealer in brick and mortar who knows no more of design than a monkey,—will be found to exercise a destructive influence upon the furniture, however good. The large things will look clumsy without looking handsome; the small, insignificant without being *mignonnes*. The chimney mirrors will overpower the fireplaces; the doors will be refractory whatever they are dressed in; the meagre, miserable niches will admit of no furniture save what is meagre like themselves,

and you will never get really fine lights and shadows upon anything.

It is for this reason that many of the old houses built by the brothers Adams, by Inigo Jones, and others of their time, have become popular with persons of taste, despite the many disadvantages of old houses; they are often so finely planned and so well built that they add lustre to the internal additions, for architecture received much attention in England during the *decadence* of the Renascence. Hence too architects, such as Mr. Norman Shaw, Mr. Street, Mr. Gilbert Scott, &c., prefer to build in the style called Queen Anne, which admits of coloured brick, and insists upon deep, properly proportioned niches, cornices, and mantelpieces, and well-shaped windows, doors, and door entries. Many of the houses about Charles Street, Berkeley Square, Wimpole and Harley Streets, are thus admirable, and it is best before furnishing to get the mind of the house right if you can.

If you cannot (and many persons are too completely at the mercy of ignorant builders and landlords, not to say cheap leases and other domestic considerations), you must do the best you can in furniture as you have to do in dress, by concealing as well as revealing. You can hardly spoil a really fine room, as you can hardly disguise a beautiful woman: that is one of the reasons why Annamaniacs, who secure good old houses, have such a very easy task to furnish them; but you may amend a poor room with multitudinous hangings and pretty and interesting objects all calculated as to tint and shape to harmonise with each other if not with their

home. Paint and good colour are potent agents, and the suggestions I shall give will fit equally a handsome dwelling or a mean little villa.

To make a beautiful and artistic room it is not sufficient to collect a mass of good materials, and mix them together. You may spend a fortune at a fashionable decorator's, and make your house look like an upholsterer's showroom; or you may fill your house with antiquities of rare merit and calibre, and make it look like an old curiosity-shop; but it may be most unpleasing all the same.

The furnishing ought to be carried out on some sort of system; and this is especially difficult when the taste is already refined enough to prefer ancient art to new. For it is easy enough to buy cartloads of goods, but the temptations offered by each century in succession, each country in turn, make it impossible to carry out a definite plan without heroic self-control. Old Oriental, genuine old English (say fifteenth century Gothic), early Renascence, Louis XIV., or genuine Queen Anne and genuine Georgian, all hold out beckoning fingers of welcome.

The aimless conglomeration of totally discordant periods and schools may be utterly confusing and unpleasant; although there *is* a mode of arranging an eclectic style of room which has very great advantages, eclectic and discordant being understood to differ.

The union of works of art of all kinds and from all quarters of the globe suggests a characterless and unmeaning medley, like a building compounded of several opposing styles; yet, when there is no preponderance of

any single item which can put the remainder out of keeping, this union forms the most satisfactory, because elastic, background for changing elements, just as a liberal spirit often reconciles conflicting opinions on a common ground of peace. It has another advantage, in allowing of alterations impossible in a room that severely represents a certain period. The first rule is, not to have too much of any one thing—directly there is a preponderance it must be isolated, and suggests a collection intact. The next rule is, to keep the key of colour low, by avoiding too-vivid spots or masses, yet the tone must be rather warm than cold. It is wonderful, when the elements are sufficiently varied, both in character and colour, how bright the new additions may be, or how quaint, or how simple, without disturbing the repose. The myriad curves and colours in an Indian shawl do not break the harmonious tone; only here, or there, one broad mass of soft self-colour recreates the eye. In a shawl it is in the middle—in a room it may be on ceiling, or floor, or wall—*somewhere* the eye will insist upon it.

An eclectic room ought not to be built on any striking architectural style; that in itself would cause a dissonance. Gothic, or Oriental, or Renascence arches and mouldings would demand to be carried out by similar furniture. But as the common English room cannot lay claim to the dignity of 'architecture' at all, cornice, panels, windows, mantel-shelves being all equally nondescript, the eclectic style of decoration is facilitated. In fact, to put it briefly, extremes meet. Imperfect conglomerations are 'confusion worse confounded,' but if

the medley is sufficiently great it forms harmony somehow like a Christmas pudding.

There are two systems of arranging an eclectic room. The room may avowedly embrace a period extending over certain centuries without pretending to be a 'period' room; it may have its prevailing character mediæval, or Renascence, or eighteenth century; it may be rude or rich. Say the mediæval element be preferred—then the colouring of the walls should be simple, yet gay; tapestries of worsted and plain surfaces of paint may be the background to all the *objets de verte* produced up to, say 1500—such as old oak, pictures of early schools, crystals and pottery; and the furniture, though modern for comfort's sake, should be massive, and built after the Gothic precedent of simple construction with decorated surfaces—the useful purpose being always honestly admitted in the ornament. If Europe and the East are ransacked for mediæval work, old ivory or inlaid chests, and cabinets, the variety will be found enormous and the mixture not incongruous. In such a room a huge mirror of plate-glass would be absurd; not so spring seats, which do not assert the modern element noticeably by their outline.

I. A Renascence Eclectic Room.

The Renascence period offers as wide a choice; but this pseudo-classic time is out of harmony with Gothic work. It is completely distinct, and Renascence designs resent the propinquity of those for which the term 'Gothic' was coined in contempt in the sixteenth cen-

tury. But the work of at least two centuries, all the world over, is ready to hand. Northern and Southern interpretations of that overpowering movement; moreover the old world may contribute, for genuine classic fragments in marble, bronze, or glass, may mix with Raphaels and Murillos on the walls, Vandykes, and Durer prints, autotypes of the old masters' sketches, and even photographs of fine pictures, as well as Venetian glass, Brussels and Arras tapestry, old Oriental tissues and panels of leather, or leather paper. Taste demands that the tables and chairs should be in harmony, and here *some* of the Empire furniture (a classic revival) comes in properly, and far more gracefully than when isolated in a drear and scanty Empire room, i.e. good inlaid tables, sofas, wine coolers, &c.

The Parisians are partial to eclectic rooms of this kind, especially those with the Renascence stamp, as well as Renascence rooms furnished after a given date. Such seem peculiarly fit for the present day, which in its thirst for knowledge among both men and women, its increasing luxury, its materialism, and its love for the antique, is indeed a second Renascence time.

II. An Eighteenth-Century Eclectic Room.

The Louis XIV. fashions are, again, wholly distinct; the mixture of Boule work and *pietra dura* with pure classic types or Gothic work would be a revolting medley, and this is what an eclectic room should *not* be. Louis XIV. fashions, however, go with Oriental

work when well mixed, as the connoisseurs of his day knew how to mix them, 'magots à gros ventre de la tournure la plus neuve et la plus bouffonne,' say contemporaries, on every table and console, and lacquer cabinets on all sides. The gallant and mirthful designs of French porcelain agree with the general mood of haughty frivolity belonging to that time, and to no other. But porcelain should never be placed thoughtlessly in a hostile *milieu*. The rude surroundings of a rough or an indigent period do not correspond with those of an era of excessive luxury, however interesting both may be in their several styles. *Modern* Boule and *pietra dura* should only be mixed with the antique to point a wholesome moral; the style at its very best escaped vulgarity and frippery by its superb workmanship and laborious finish—the modern does not escape: it always betrays itself by its scamped, coarse inlaying, and hastily-cast, not hand-worked, mounts. The difference is clear on comparison. On the other hand, eclecticism may go to greater lengths than this.

In either of the two first quoted eclectic rooms Sèvres china would be completely out of place, for this belongs to a period outside the Renascence, while in the eighteenth-century room it is in perfect good taste. A room so eclectic as to admit Sèvres may admit Minton, and such a room must not allow any one period to give it a *cachet*. It must associate objects avowedly because they are beautiful, never because they are consistent; and every modern object must be borne out by others of similar date to prevent any invidious comparisons. The room may then be made a capital background for the

inhabitants; it should indeed aim at being nothing but a background. Then nothing will be inconsistent, not even big mirrors. A seventeenth-century screen may be used to isolate an Imperial Roman bust, a Sèvres tazza may rest upon a modern Turkish cloth, an early Moorish *secretaire* may support an Indian box, Berlin and Worcester pots may mix discreetly with Flemish grey, Chinese hangings and Gothic tapestry, modern English curtains may hang beside the old bullion and velvet of a century ago, and sixteenth-century marble and oak may stand on nineteenth-century rush matting, and what a comfort it is if it may!

III. A Modern Eclectic Room.

An avowedly modern room (one in which modern upholstery prevails) always seems to me injured by the introduction of antiquities, which, like peculiar shades of colour, and certain classes of ornament, always require *carrying out* of the picture. They injure the modern manufactures by putting out their light (according to the connoisseur), or by 'looking shabby' (according to the Philistine); and after all they almost disappear in their places, lost and overpowered by the more self-asserting shapes and dyes of machine-cutting and distillation, like timid waifs hunted about and pecked to death.

Thus a modern eclectic room may admit modern Oriental objects in sufficiently small quantities, Indian, Chinese, African, and the like, modern German, Swiss, and Russian carving and casts, Italian mosaics, Doulton ware, Minton's china and tiles, and all the best efforts of

the nineteenth century. But a medley overstepping the limits of a few hundred years, unless for some very good reason, becomes unpleasant, because the incongruities are powerful enough to strike even the most ignorant.

The distinction between an eclectic room furnished upon some reasonable system, and a room furnished after a given period, must here be noted. The one is really a medley, directed with taste; the other reproduces a scene which a contemporary might have viewed, and must have *no anachronisms*.

Balance.

In laying down abstract rules for beauty, and for distinguishing what is beautiful in form from what is ugly, we must remember that two great laws chiefly determine the lines and dimensions of curves, the folds of garments, &c.—one is the law of gravity, the other the law of balance. It is the law of gravity, or attraction downward, which draws a thin fabric into small and delicate plaits as it hangs, and a thick one into large, round, weighty ones; it is the law of balance combined with gravity which sends out the tree-boughs into tortuous, wide-reaching arches, which nevertheless do not uproot the tree. When the Japanese acrobats came to England some years ago, and climbed into strange groups, balancing ladders and chairs at angles apparently impossible, at least new to English spectators, we stared with unobservant eyes that never had marked how a light flower balances its stems of blossoms, directing its arms this way or that as it seeks the sun, and settling its

main stalk or body into the precise attitude which shall support their weight with least distress and strain—a sight which we *might* have marked and learnt a lesson from, as the Japanese discoverer of those strange groupings doubtless did. They are artists at heart, the Japanese, because they love and study nature so deeply; and the feats of those climbing jugglers, and their surprising knowledge of the proper distribution of weight, *were* familiar to their British imitators, were founded upon the natural laws of balance which the flower obeys.

Many people possess, unconsciously, a sense of proportion and balance, which is technically called an 'eye for form,' a 'correct eye;' just as others possess a subtle appreciation of the value (or balance) of tints, also called an 'eye for colour.' Both are derived from observation, conscious or not, of natural effects. Of some it is a 'birthright;' by others it may be acquired, like Jacob's.

These persons always know when a certain combination of curves and colours 'looks right;' they feel instinctively when such a curve, mass, or 'tone' wants supporting by such another; they can never tolerate a lop-sided or top-heavy effect, and will say, 'this must be so, I know not why.' In reality, the nice sense of balance or proportion is satisfied or outraged by right or wrong (i.e. natural or unnatural) positions or qualities; and persons who, by nature or grace—and the first is best—possess the happy instinct, are certain always to surround themselves with things beautiful and pleasant, as a plant selects the nourishment it wants from the medley of outward forces, and draws in its native blue or red from the sun's white rays.

The same laws which direct forms direct hues. Very deep or pronounced colours never look well when placed *above* light and delicate ones—e.g. a pale blue dado surmounted by an Indian red frieze. The latter ought to form the dado as it is the heavier, hotter colour of the two. Dark green above and pale green below are equally uncomfortable—why? Because in nature we are accustomed to dark colours nearest our feet and pale ones nearest the sky. Yet a dark mass may surmount a pale one if maintained by dark-toned columns of colour, because (nature again!) the columns may seem to hold up a cornice in shadow.

The distribution of colours demands thought and understanding, like the distribution of forms. A very insignificant, plainly-furnished room should never have a gay, large-patterned ceiling, or it will seem to be descending on the heads of folks; for in nature all heavy masses are supported by equal masses, either in dispersed or condensed matter—an umbrageous tree has its mighty trunk, a mountain its width of base—the very Rocking Stone of Ireland is balanced on the same principle as a standard rose—otherwise great were the fall.

In my first chapter I have shown that there ought to be a nucleus, or minor point of interest arranged, pending the major point, the people, to which the colours 'work up.'

For determining the position of the various pieces of furniture in the room, and the various masses of colour which they bring within sight, the proper distribution of masses must always be studied, so that the room may not look lop-sided; but by this I do not mean that

everything is to be symmetrically arranged, with chairs 'to correspond' and tables 'to correspond,' placed at regular intervals along the walls. Balance must not be confounded with symmetry, and monotony, either in colour, shape or place, is as fatiguing to the eye as it is disastrous to the happy impression of the room.

As an explanation of my meaning I may say that, given a vast black *armoire* at one end of the room, which, besides possessing light and shade of its own, throws a deep shadow on the wall, a slight ebony table at the corresponding end of the wall would throw the room out of balance; but supposing you have neither grand piano, cabinet, nor other heavy mass which you can place there, the table may be *made* to balance the *armoire* satisfactorily by hanging above it some large picture in dark tone, or heavy mirror, or nest of books—books always tell dark. On the other hand, put a case that the vast *armoire* is not black, but light in colour, a much smaller piece of furniture *of more pronounced tone* may fairly balance it—an ebony table, a dark lacquer cabinet, &c. A black coffer may be balanced by a black Japanese *étagère* four or five times its height and breadth, if the amount of black, including shadow, dispersed in the open *étagère* is about equal to that condensed on the visible surface of the coffer. A large mass of bright-coloured material, such as an Indian table-cloth, will often balance a dark mass in wood; a mass of gold may be balanced by a mass of scarlet, or white if the room is sombre, and so on—as long as the relative strength or value of the two masses strikes the eye as equal; and a room so planned and *subtly* balanced will be far more

interesting, because full of surprises and discoveries, than any room laboriously matched corner by corner, side by side.

Proportion.

It is very difficult, of course, to make plain by description what can only be really proven by experiment. Even in the most accustomed and skilful hands things have a knack of looking different in different places, larger or smaller according to their surroundings in most *unexpected* fashion. The proportions of rooms have a strong effect upon certain details of furniture hardly to be made clear on paper. I have known cases where such large machines as sideboards and wardrobes, which looked massive and imposing in large rooms, became suddenly dwarfed and debased by being transferred to small rooms—a result wholly outside the range of supposition, for one would naturally imagine that a thing which looked large in a large room, would look considerably larger in a little one. But it is a fact that proportions, which are no doubt relative at all times, often resist the rules we think to govern them by.

Pictures, too, are very surprising occasionally. They will not show up where you think they are likely to, judging from the position of the window without trial. Sometimes they will persist in looking right when brought in contact with a quantity of bright-coloured porcelain which *ought* to put the colours out; and in looking wrong when you have got just (what you suppose) the right tint behind them and about them,

and the light striking at the proper angle—ah! they are as unmanageable as Brigham Young's wives. I once had an infinity of trouble with a marble bust, for which I had prepared a corner of surpassing snugness, against some dim tapestry, and within reach of dark Cordovan leather, which I believed would counteract the coldness of colour; and this obstinate bust absolutely declined every natural-seeming place, and at last settled down in the most unlikely place behind a door, where it shone and breathed as it would do nowhere else. In another room I had the same trouble with that bust. I prepared a similar corner behind the door such as I thought it liked, with the same background, the same angle of light, the same pedestal, in vain: my bust now selected the Cordovan leather as a roosting-place, against which it had previously so obstinately declined to be visible. I find it impossible to lay down general laws in certain cases as to what colours and forms will go together, for sometimes every theory will be upset and a whole room disorganised by a sudden mystery, which one would fondly fancy a little study and thought might easily solve.

Symmetry.

For my own part I object to much symmetry in a room, though I demand balance. I am distinctly annoyed if, on finding a bust of Apollo in one corner I perceive its mate Diana in the opposite corner. Most 'pairs' are difficult to dispose of. They require tact to escape insipidity—and Apollo in one corner should be

balanced by some completely different mass in the other —a mass if possible on a higher or lower level, which cannot associate itself in the mind as a match, yet which really forms an exact balance by its value of colour or by its size. The size may correspond in value too, even if it occupy more space: the *Balance* may be right.

But here I shall not only have all the 'Empire' admirers against me but the Georgian admirers too—for they all fancy they belong to one faction—and the 'Empire' rooms, modelled partly on the Greek reaction, partly on the poverty of the ruined *noblesse*, and partly on an austere mood, had very little furniture, and what they had was arranged as symmetrically and as contrary to the natural plan as could possibly be. Indeed, to shift a chair or change your position was a crime in the eyes of our strict great-grandmothers, as it was to appear in the drawing-room without gloves, even in the morning. They forgot Hogarth's 'line of beauty,' and never looked at nature—it was the passion for geometric figures foggily *redivivus*.

Light and Shade.

No article should be placed without a reason. Its colour and quality, the way in which the light falls, the colour thrown by the window or its blind, as well as the position of the other objects must be considered. Objects in relief must not be placed so as to face the light, and so lose half their beauty; they must be arranged where the light will strike them from the side, and this will bring out the most minute depressions and elevations. A pretty effect

of light is worth half a dozen extra ornaments, and that is why windows cut in unusual places are often so pretty — there are surprises for the eye in store. Hidden lamps are often most useful for the same reason. For what were the use of a Titian in the dark, or of a jade bowl so set against the light that it looked black, or some rare cameo in coral laid against a pink surface, that destroyed its colour and made it almost disappear? The placing of objects betrays the taste (or the want of it) in the owner of a room far more than the quantity of precious things he ranges around it, or his reckless use of them on his dinner-table.

Every object in the room should have its comfort seen to, like a guest from whom you expect pleasure and profit. After seeing to the light in its face, the background must be considered: every brightly-coloured thing should stand against its complementary colour or some colour which throws it up; sometimes a paler or darker shade of its own colour will do this better than a complementary. Some peculiar reds and greens are a good background for everything—china, pictures, prints, books, and flowers—although neither dingy nor dark. The greens are no doubt appropriated by Queen Annites; the reds are outside 'the pale,' and perhaps none the worse for that.

CHAPTER II

ON WALLS

Colour of the Background.

THE colour of the walls is so important an item in the general good or bad impression of a room, that no beauty of minor objects can atone for a bad background; but a good wall-colour may redeem the minor objects.

The walls are a background not only to furniture but to faces, not only to faces but to dresses, and they ought to harmonise with the main pieces of furniture, which themselves become part of the wall as they modify the background. Walls should be bright without vying with colours brought against them, i.e. the colours used must be toned down by the admixture of umber or white with the pigments; or they should be dark, with an indistinct pattern which breaks up the flatness of plain colours, and throws them back like distance. The colouring of the walls, whether on the whole pale or dark, must never be cold, as no after-decorations

check the gloom; thus white or grey should never be used unless flanked by a dado of warm hue, such as polished oak panels, whose rich brown is easily relieved by pictures, brasses or mirrors, or a stencilled dado enclosing medallions or stripes, whose colours counteract the chill above. Panelling of marquetry (always warm in tone), or a simpler kind of inlaid wood, was sometimes surmounted by a piece of white wall arched into a white ceiling in old Dutch houses, but cream or some dull red tint are better. Marble panels, polished like those which lined the passage where the threatened Domitian paced, hoping to catch the reflections of danger ere it reached him, might be oftener used in wealthy houses. The colours of marble mounted in white or black are too lovely to be overlooked, and veneer is so easy that the expense would hardly exceed many uglier wall-coverings. The ancients veneered panels with lapis lazuli, malachite and ivory. The Neapolitan Giovanni da Nola inserted plaques of marbles among his lovely wood-reliefs in furniture. What cannot money do joined to a little taste and imagination! but England possesses more money than wits.

The possessors of fine embroideries and shawls like Mr. Alfred Morrison may emulate him in framing them, like pictures, on the walls. In this case a plain wall beneath, of a colour which sets them off, is preferable to an elaborate pattern which gets confused with them.

The same is true of pictures. But the frames of pictures often form a destructive element in wall colour; they are too angular, they present too striking a mass of glossy gold, and thus as often kill the picture as not. Pictures ought to be used as panels more than they are,

a little lath, or other simple moulding would easily cut the wall into panels which fitted the frames, over which the main colour in the wall itself should be carried. It is a pity that the old silver frames have gone out, they were in some places far more beautiful than gold. And silver and gold together might be used with oak or mahogany in a manner infinitely preferable to the oblong and ill-fitting projections which pictures (till you are close enough for scrutiny) in modern gold frames usually are on a wall. An ugly gold frame we must remember, is as objectionable as any other ugly mass of gilding; and its being fastened to a picture, which we will suppose is a work of thought and skill, is no excuse, but a further condemnation.

For pictures, or other articles of *vertu*, a plain warm colour, or one where the pattern is sufficiently indistinct, is necessary. Blue, grey, and slate walls are always unpleasant, because these colours are cold. I knew a room painted slate-grey, which no gaiety of Algerine curtains could dissever in the mind from the asphalte walls of Newgate, which cheerful dwelling I once went over. White walls I have so long denounced that I need not here add venom to their death-blow—society is rapidly giving them up. They greatly diminish the size of the room, as a white ceiling diminishes its height. They cast an unpleasant glare on all polished surfaces, ruin pictures, and against such a background curves must be exaggerated in order to 'tell.' A dark wall adds size, because the eye cannot exactly measure the distance at which the wall stands; whereas, in the case of a white wall, the eye calculates it to an inch. Velvet is one of the most beautiful coverings for a room; it is

so fine a background in any soft colour, and with care it may be kept very clean. It must not be brushed, but wiped with a soft damp cloth, which brings off the dust in little ribs. Dark amber, blue, or crimson is extremely rich, and, when carefully adapted, hardly dearer than the costly papers which rich people buy.

Moreover, it can be taken down, and cleaned or redyed, or replaced, as a costly paper cannot. This is one of the advantages of tapestry which I have remarked under the head of Curtains; it is not only a beautiful ornament, but so warm through its being loose, and the layer of air between it and the wall becoming warmed, that a tapestried room may be inhabited without a fire sometimes more comfortably than a thin-walled, paper-hung room *with* one. Of course I do not mean a long-neglected old chamber, which has grown damp and musty from want of use. All hangings will collect damp if they are allowed to; but tapestry well cared for, cleaned occasionally with bread or benzole, and kept aired, is not as musty as dirty paper; no damper or dustier, or fustier, or mustier than the carpet; and is free from the risks of arsenic, which analysts know occurs in *all* paper-hangings, of whatever colour, which give off dust when rubbed or crumpled.

The colouring of old Flemish tapestry is very fine, and throws up everything placed against it. I think pictures should not be hung against it, on the principle that one picture should not be hung on another, not because it would not set them off; though in the seventeenth century people were not so particular, but hung their pictures over their tapestry as it pleased them.

Tapestry.

Tapestry considered as furniture, both useful and ornamental, might occupy a volume; and those interested in the progress of this beautiful art should study M. Pinchard's long-promised work, or, in English, Jacquemart, or Mrs. Owen's 'Book of Needlework,' and then compare some of the very early pieces in the South Kensington Museum with the lovely breathing female forms recently to be seen upon the Gobelin looms, which have all the vigour of paintings, all the luminous transparency of flesh which Rubens taught the world, and the accurate drawing of strict academic study.

Many persons have a rooted aversion to tapestry because, they say, it harbours dust and insects, and is not as satisfactory in any way as paint or paper. As to the dust and insects, such an objection might apply to curtains, if they were left up long enough, but tapestry does not mean necessarily *dirty* tapestry, and it appears to me that it is more satisfactory than paint because it has a pictorial design, and than paper because it can be removed and cleaned. There is no background better than old tapestry, because the colours have grown dim enough not be obtrusive. Early tapestry, like early windows, was made in somewhat flat designs with a strongly marked outline; and this purely decorative kind of treatment does not make an apparent breach in the wall by confusing the perspective. Later tapestry, such as that designed by and 'after' Rubens, aimed rather at deceptions, which are far less satisfactory to the eye

unless framed as an avowed picture, and when they were new must have been far less beautiful than they are now in faded age. The fashion has the prestige of antiquity, for the origin of tapestry hangings in the remote Eastern past is unknown; and no one who has used it can deny that it gives great warmth to a room, not only by covering draughty chinks, but by creating a space of warmed air between itself and the wall. This is on the principle of several thin garments being warmer than a single very thick one—even though the latter be thicker than the three combined—because of the intervening layers of warmed air.

Through all the changes which visited our walls up to the production of wall-papers, tapestry lived and improved; the monkish artists first designed for tapestry, among them cruel Dunstan himself. They probably actually wove it. Raphael and his pupils were not above drawing the great cartoons now in the South Kensington Museum, and many sixteenth century and seventeenth century designs—nay, many 300 years earlier, like those matchless feats of the loom at Berne, and the fine pieces at Chartres—were ambitious enough. Battles, processions, hunts, feasts—the subjects had no end, and were perhaps the largest and most important artistic productions till canvas superseded panels for pictures.

There were great tapestry manufactories in Flanders, France, Italy, and England from very early times. Those in France date back to 1025, when a manufactory was working at Poitiers, and in the eleventh century Scandinavian tapestries are spoken of. All these were probably a kind of embroidery like Saracenic tapestry; it was

called *wah-hrægel*, wall coverings. The Bayeux piece is all we have left of it. Towards the close of the twelfth century Flanders began to use low-warp and high-warp looms, and there may have been English factories as early. Sir Francis Crane owned one at Mortlake, *temp.* James I., of which Francis de Cleyn was master; some of his paintings resembled Parmegiano's, and Gibson, the dwarf painter, was one of his pupils. Rubens sketched cartoons in Charles I.'s reign for this manufactory; but in Charles II.'s reign, after Crane's death, it declined, perhaps because leather and velvet were rather less costly. Henri IV. and Louis XIV. greatly encouraged the tapestry works; and pieces are spoken of 120 ells long. In Florence we see magnificent pieces worked with gold and gems, as pictures designed by the old masters may well be!

Tapestry should be more sedulously collected and preserved than it is. It cost vast sums to make; it decreases by natural accidents every year; yet it is often finer in decay than when the threads were fresh, and possibly a little over-bright, for the true purpose of walls—a background. If dirty, it should be cleaned with care, and in any case mounted properly with the town-mark and the signature visible.

The most beautiful rooms are usually dark in colour, with large windows through which plenteous sunlight streams. For these tapestry is eminently proper. The fashionable Empire rooms with small windows, which the straw-colour walls hardly atone for, would not be suitable.

Embroidered Walls.

The good old English fashion of embroidery, so fashionable now, ought to inspire artistic idlers to feats of skill. We were ahead of France and Italy in this skill with the needle when we were ahead in nothing else. In the sixth and seventh centuries we had schools of art-embroidery. Near Ely an Anglo-Saxon lady had established a number of young girls, who worked with her for the benefit of the monastery; and also in the seventh century St. Ethelreda, virgin and queen, and first Abbess of Ely, presented to St. Cuthbert a stole and a maniple which she had marvellously embroidered. An anecdote related by Matthew of Paris, 1246, shows us that the standard of this English work was maintained. 'About the same time the Lord Pope, having observed that the ecclesiastical ornaments of some Englishmen, such as the choristers' capes and the mitres, were embroidered in gold thread in a very desirable fashion, asked where those works were made, and received answer, in England. Then said the Pope: "England is verily a garden of delights for us. It is truly a never-failing spring, and there where many things abound, much may be extorted." ' Accordingly the same Lord Pope lost very little time in demanding in the name of Holy Church those embroideries in gold which he preferred to all others, by sacred and sealed briefs, a demand which agreed very well with those London merchants who traded in this work.

Panels down the whole wall, or small panels let into

frames, of embroidery on velvet, in either silk or wool, would be a really beautiful ornament and occupation. Gradually the furniture might match the walls in soft, conventional designs—why not the ceiling too? A pale-blue satin ceiling, a maroon wall, with chairs and table-covers corresponding with such tints as were introduced on the panels, would be 'high art' without reproach, and the wooden frames of the panels might be fastened at their crossing by a small painted architectural rose. It could be removed bodily on changing residence.

I suggest, however, a stronger *twisted* silk in preference to the art-school floss, for the purpose of satisfactory wear, to repay the labour given.

Leather.

Cordovan leather, like some of the old Norwich leather, is a fine background, but difficult to obtain. Many old families have rolls of it rotting in their lofts and lumber-rooms in a style which makes a penniless collector's blood boil. These old leathers look well set in large or small panels. What leather can attain to in colour and design I have shown in 'a Louis XIV. Room;' let me beg the aroused possessors of old pieces to have them properly repaired, oiled out, and mounted by firms who will not tamper with them or repaint the surface. I have seen screens of old leather entirely painted over, in curiosity-shops, in colours which set one's teeth on edge, and with a delicacy and precision of hand worthy an elephant with a paint-brush tied to his hind-leg, and trained at Hengler's. This is barbarity nearly as

grievous as 'restoring' the pictures of the old masters, and every artist knows what *that* means.

Of course with walls so rich and sombre as those covered with sixteenth-century leather, the ceiling should be rich as well, otherwise the contrast will be too strong.

It is rather depressing to know that the beautiful peacock-room painted by Mr. J. M. Whistler for Mr. Leyland was worked upon a fine collection of old Norwich leather, which, however 'ugly' in some eyes, was undoubtedly too precious to be thus destroyed.

Leather was at one time used as carpets. The inventories of the Duke of Burgundy and Isabeau de Bavaria included 'leathers for laying down in the rooms in summer time' (1416). The Cluny Museum contains some fine painted leather panels taken from an old house in Rouen, representing Rome seated and bearing Victory, and other Roman subjects. The cost was very great on account of the skill required in working. An entry from the Royal accounts of Charles VIII. is curious: '1496. To Jehan Garnier, saddler, residing at Tours, the sum of 4 livres 15 sous Tournoys, granted to him for a large white ox-skin delivered and consigned by him to a painter whom the King had sent for from Italy, whom the said lady (the Queen) had ordered to make and paint the hangings of her bed—iiij. liv. xv. S.'

Silk.

Many of the old houses of George III.'s time still wear the silken hangings put up when the houses were

built or modernised, in his time, such hangings relegating the old leather to perdition. Sky-blue silk or satin, or rose-pink, which has now faded to a beautiful silver grey, or pale green which goes admirably with old Sèvres or old Dresden china, and a little gold and silver varied in colour, as was fashionable, by the gold leaf being laid on a light impression of green, vermilion, &c., an effect we see so much of in the Palace of Fontainebleau.

What paper would have lasted as long as that old wall-silk, looking well to the last worn thread? What modern silks, too, would last as that did on chairs and couches, and only fray a little at the edge?

Modern French connoisseurs line walls and ceiling alike with silk or satin, the doors protected by closing *portières* of the same. Victor Hugo's charming rooms are thus covered, like a magnified *bonbonnière* in which we are the bonbons. If materials are used for walls, they may be either hung flat or in folds; festooned, or even plaited like a vallance, and supported on nails or a rod and rings. If they are hung flat they usually require some kind of panel or framework to fix the edges, but they could never be too firmly fixed to admit of removal.

Figured poplin would look very rich, and would wear very well, if procured genuine from a respectable Irish firm.

Paper.

Of papers, those which emulate tapestry in a certain harmonious tone of broken colour are the best. Many

of Morris's papers, copied from old eighteenth-century ones, themselves copied from damask and leather patterns, are very good. The well-known grey pomegranate is really very fine indeed. A certain dark-red poppy-pattern, wherein the flowers mingle dimly with a little gold, like sun rays in water (procurable at Elliott's, Vere Street), has a very good effect, and throws up pictures and china well. No paper should have a very pronounced and distinct pattern, as that diminishes the apparent size of the room by bringing the walls near to the eye. Remember the feverish creations in paper *temp.* Queen Anne! Indistinctness, like darkness, or like distance, throws them back. Jeffreys, Islington, whose place is worth a visit, has brought out some very fine wall-papers, some of them designed by Walter Crane in fine Renascence and original patterns. The peacock frieze may be cited, and the imitations of sixteenth-century leathers, and bronze and marble bas-reliefs for friezes and panels, &c. Many of them are suitable for ceilings, especially the wild roses, on gold or silver grounds.

Red of a bright soft tone is an admirable background—a tone much lighter than maroon, not unlike a very deep salmon colour. It is made of Venetian red mixed with white. Woollams and Co. sell it in a plain, unglazed paper, and nothing can be nicer, especially for a large and rather dark room that needs brightening up. It is also good for staircases, and old carved frames are charming on such a wall, to say nothing of old pictures.

Pale pink for walls—the common ideal of a juvenile bride—used to be thought 'becoming' by lending a re-

flected flush to the complexion. I do not, however, think it has that merit, and dark furniture looks as ill against pale pink as against white and gold. In a room as light-coloured as that, all the woodwork—say frames of chairs, &c.—should be pale, as in Louis XIV. and Louis XV. furniture, with delicate gilt mouldings and faint satins, to be as little obtrusive as possible.

Paint and Stencilling.

Painted or distempered and stencilled walls are not sufficiently in use in England. They are clean, and do not, or need not, cost as much as many a dear paper. In old Italian bedrooms one finds the wall invariably painted and roughly stencilled in patterns on the stucco. In old England, of course, a painted wall was the commonest, either plain, or worked into pictures and frescoes of quaint beauty—the 'storied walls' which suggested conversation, pointed a joke, and pleased and instructed rich and poor, grown-ups and children.

One simple old pattern, imitative of cloth hangings, is always effective. A precept in the twentieth year of Henry III. ordained that 'the king's great chamber at Westminster be painted a green colour like a curtain, that in the great gable or frontispiece of the said chamber a French inscription should be painted, and that the king's little wardrobe should be painted of a green colour to imitate a curtain': whilst the queen's chamber was covered with historical paintings. Panelling was then in use, and Henry III. ordered that his queen's bedroom 'should be freshly wainscotted and lined, and that a list

or border should be made, well painted with images of our Lord and angels, with incense-pots scattered over it,' &c.—this was on a special occasion of festivity. William the Florentine and John of St. Omer were artists brought by him to England; these are among the first names of decorators preserved in our records. Good washable paint is the cleanest and healthiest of coverings for walls.

Distemper is so cheap while it is as satisfactory in effect as flatted paint, that people really might indulge oftener in the luxury of a clean coat for their rooms. The dirtiness of fashionable houses in London, in spite of the efforts of the best servants (though some I fancy count on the ladies doing their work for them), is really distressing to those who are particular, or used to the country. The fires, the outdoor traffic, the gas, make the duster unequal to cope with the enemy, Dirt, who clings to the walls, doors, sofa-tops and chair seats, as well as—oh, horror!—the corners of stairs and passages, especially in dwellings where the mistress is elderly or shortsighted. And as most rooms can be re-decorated within a week if several workmen are employed, hostesses ought really to regard the cost they inflict on guests who come in clean gowns and go home with the trains soiled all round; and have their rooms swept properly every day, and re-coloured (at least the lower part) every other year. Cleanliness is one of the most becoming of ornaments.

Mirroring.

If a room is over-narrow one way, it is curious how much the offending wall may be thrown back by little panels of looking-glass united by an oak or ebonised moulding. They look well about fifteen inches by ten in size; the effect of a new room with a kind of trellis partition is then obtained, often quite deceptive, and if the room be rather dark and the glass panels face the window, they act as powerfully as reflectors in illuminating the room. These little panels may be of plain or bevelled glass; the moulding should be broad enough to give the impression of sufficient strength for a trellis—say two and a half inches wide. Walls of mirroring were fashionable in the seventeenth century, but the mirrors were richly painted, as I shall later show. Ceilings of mirrorings were also made to tally with the walls, and they are, of course, a kind of wall.

Ceilings.

The wondrous ceilings of old Rome, mentioned by Seneca, made so as to revolve and show changing colours and decorations, as well as to admit acrobats and other dining-room diversions, are hardly likely to be revived in prosaic England, even in such mechanical days as ours. We do not propose to launch out into fanciful descriptions, or recommend their being again 'pegmata per se surgentia et tabulata tacite in sublime crescentia,' for people commonly have to be content with ceilings as

they are, at least as to the fabric. Tenants seldom build their own houses, and are usually averse to spending too much money on a building they only possess on lease.

But we might make something better than we ever do of our ceilings. Paint is not too expensive to obtain, if it gives pleasure for five, ten, or twenty years to the owners; and as a well painted ceiling lasts extremely well and gives a tone to the room which no other decoration does, I may offer a few hints on the subject.

Ceilings should always be coloured; for a darkish ceiling throws no cold reflections down, and materially heightens the room. The old Georgian ceilings of delicately moulded plaster used to be whitened: but this was part of the general fashion of bare material which came in with the Renascence, because the antique carving and stucco reliefs were often found bare; but the classics, and the mediæval artists in their best time, not only knew but never disregarded the importance of colour. And such Georgian ceilings are better, even when tinted in a few faint colours, than left white, though outstanding ornament, happily, always itself forms variations in tints by natural shadows.

Those who have seen the magnificent ceilings in Venetian palaces must admit that although they would be too heavy and oppressive for a small drawing-room, it is more comfortable to see something pretty when we look up than a blank surface of whitey-grey paint. They are mostly formed on the simplest art-principles, cross beams which support the roof, and which naturally form panels that ask for decoration.

These panels once formed, any amount of ideas occur to us. The beams must be carved, then painted, then gilt in charming contrasts of colour; the intervening spaces may be treated in plain colour, or dotted with bosses more or less elegant, or filled with pictures of suitable subjects. This form of ceiling appears to me the most beautiful, and capable of the most delicious variations.

The fashion of treating the ceiling as an open roof, and painting it with clouds, inhabited by the heathen divinities either foreshortened in mid-air or treated in the flat, is one which I feel is false in taste; but we have all seen ceilings so splendidly painted that one forgets to criticise. Raphael, Michael Angelo, and their successors decorated ceilings of this kind still visible in Rome.

These are chiefly suited to banquet-halls and ball-rooms; but a small portion of the ceiling painted like the sky with a few swallows is far from displeasing in a summer drawing-room. It ought, however, to be painted by Italians used to this kind of work, or under the supervision of an artist of calibre; otherwise the birds will have impossible wings, will stick to the 'ground' and not 'move' a hair's breadth.

People seldom notice ceilings now; they are so used to find nothing there to see; yet this expanse of surface should never be neglected by the decorator. The colour of walls *demands* carrying out above. In modern 'Empire-Anne' rooms the division of the ceiling into compartments by laths laid across has become common, and this is no doubt a step in progress, only the whiteness remains distressing, and the uniformity of the

parallelograms, echoing the window-panes, creates no fresh interest. If the laths were left brown, and the spaces intervening bore a simple architectural 'rose' projecting, or simply painted in a few colours, the eye would be refreshed. Coats of arms at once occur as a suitable decoration either for the ceiling-panels or for the point where the laths cross; they can be brilliantly coloured without being obtrusive, because all colours are darkened by shadow at that elevation.

The ancient decorations of the ceiling of St. Albans Cathedral are painted very roughly on laths in colours, brown predominating. Such decorations might easily be done by idle sons and daughters, or would make a capital subject for a 'Bee.' A ceiling-bee would be more to the purpose than a spelling-bee, as the aim would be the accomplishment of a common object, instead of a few outwitting and bewildering the rest.

The Italians have a knack of so colouring flat ceilings as to look like domes: a very ingenious effect requiring the nicest calculation of distances; there is one in the museum at Milan which is painted in browns and greys which, whatever our opinion of the taste, must be confessed successful.

In Belgium I saw a ceiling closely covered with small oriental blue saucers, which formed a quaint raised pattern pleasing in itself; but as soon as we realised that they were saucers we could never be persuaded of their safety, and a vague anxiety pervaded our movements beneath that ceiling ever after. Anxiety of the kind is incompatible with good taste.

The French palaces which contain fine ceilings are

numerous. Artists of the first rank have always designed or actually painted such ceilings, which offer good opportunities for studies in folds and foreshortening. But a ceiling must be adapted to the room it crowns, and to the height at which it stands. A very obtrusive ceiling in a low-pitched room would seem to be coming down on our heads, you cannot forget it; in a very lofty room the ceiling cannot be too obtrusive, and in some modern rooms, quite like wells in their exaggerated height, we long for some ceiling that will assert its existence.

A plain ultramarine ceiling dotted with gold stars is sometimes very agreeable; but the stars must be very small, and smaller towards the centre than towards the sides. Of course they must be scattered at irregular intervals. A blue ceiling painted with a conventional cloud-border in a much paler blue is pretty also; and when blue is not liked in other parts of the room, the mass above carries out the right proportions in the least obtrusive manner. For instance, given a room furnished with various reds, a considerable share of amber and yellow, softened together with spaces of Spanish leather, which, though including many colours, tells brown:—it would be difficult here to check 'five red and three yellow,' with 'eight blue,' ordained of the orthodox colour mauve, unless the blue were on the ceiling; but in this elevated place the colour is sufficiently visible to satisfy the eye, without breaking up the scheme of colour below which might be a little 'hot' were blue wholly excluded.

The frieze should always connect the walls and ceiling by rounding off the angle, and should contain the

main colours of both either pure or in combination; e.g., a Venetian-red wall and an olive-green ceiling may have a frieze of orange containing these reds and greens, the green nearest the red, the red nearest the green; *or*, the frieze should partake noticeably of the tertiary citrine which is formed by the admixture of orange and green (see Diagram, page 12). Those who do not know what olive-green is may look at an olive.

A plain red ceiling sometimes has the happiest effect. It requires carrying out by red in the furniture. A gold ceiling contrasts beautifully with almost any coloured wall, and does not bring the roof down. Paper is less expensive than gold-leaf, and lasts better than one would expect. I have tried it with a purple wall, bringing the gold a foot down, like a frieze. Mr. Alma Tadema has tried it with the upper half of the wall gold also, and the effect is admirable. Some of Cottier's ceilings are very fine.

As hardly anything lasts worse than a white or cream ceiling, the additional expense of the first outlay is not lost in making the ceiling a work of art; and if gas be not used, such a ceiling will last a very long time, all the colours toning down equally and unnoticeably. The improvement to a room will never be disregarded by those who have once tried the experiment.

CHAPTER III.

ON WINDOWS.

Transparent Walls.

THE windows offer a large and attractive field for decoration, so attractive and so useful that nothing but ignorance of the capacities of glass can be our excuse for overlooking it.

It seems singular that at a time when art was still in the cradle, that branch of its development which culminates in painted glass should have been most encouraged, most advanced, and most popular. Giotto had scarcely breathed; Cimabue was discovering the laws of painting which gave permanent life to wood and stone; but many artists only a little inferior were combining colours in glass which we still admire and copy.

The reason of this is I think clear. When a wall is heavily decorated, as the walls in 'houses of worship' were from very early times, the blank left by a window—and windows must be admitted—is at once felt, like a shock to the eye. The more rich and intricate the

colouring of the wall, the more the blank is felt, and the early windows which were only protected by a curtain or a shutter, before glass was invented, were probably an eye-sore to the eager decorators as well as a punishment to the shivering inhabitants. As soon as they devised a shield which did not exclude light they began to decorate it. The Romans used a transparent stone, *lapis specularis* (mica ?) and horn in the second century. The Moors and Persians used delicate wood-tracery in their windows even without glass, because the eye demanded it as much as to create shade—in fact a transparent shutter. The Chinese devised a thin stuff glazed with varnish or lac, polished oyster shells, and horn. In Gothic architecture, when the walls are incrusted with carving, a sudden break in the ornament, which would be caused by a plain cut window, would be, I think, distressing, as is a hard, unsoftened edge in a picture; the shock is lessened by the internal arches being splayed off, and decorated with shafts and arch-mouldings running into elaborate patterns, these enclosing glass. Thus the windows in Gothic architecture are carefully planned, both in form and in colour, to vary the scheme of ornament on the wall without too sudden a jar. They were actually transparent walls.

If they so calculated their framework, it is immediately clear how their eye would have resented a vast window of plate-glass, rectangular, colourless, like a breach in the wall. It is natural that coloured glass should have been employed both to carry out the adjacent colours and to utilise new spaces for the restless imagination, more especially as coloured glass existed

before transparent white. I have before alluded to the importance of decoration when books were scarce and knowledge scarcer. A window which could admit light by which to better view the richness within, and meantime offer its own bright story or sermon—what a thrice welcome invention! How we can comprehend the labour and cost spent on so valuable an addition! As architecture advanced, the brilliancy and size of the windows advanced with it, till we arrive at such masterpieces of knowledge, fancy, and technical skill as the windows in Rheims Cathedral.

Mediæval Painted Glass.

Of course the use of coloured glass in mosaic is very old. The walls of Theodoric's palace at Rome were brilliant with pictures whose shining fragments still strew the waste ground, and from such use of glass the step to transparent mosaics in casements is not great. The first authors who speak of glass windows are St. Jerome and Gregory of Tours, who lived towards the end of the fourth century. St. Wilfrid, Archbishop of York, filled the vacant windows of the cathedral with glass about 669; in 674 Abbot Benedict Biscop brought artists from France to glaze those of the Abbey of Wearmouth; and in 979 there were Venetian workmen, settled at Limoges, who drew from Byzantine traditions their skill in colouring glass. Glass mosaics may even have served as models for early glass paintings. About the end of the twelfth century coloured windows came into common use in churches, with the introduction of the pointed

arch, and abolished the old tapestry curtain. These windows represented geometric patterns, or pictures, as desired: in the latter the figures were made of small pieces of self-coloured glass skilfully joined by leaden seams, but the faces were *painted* in enamel colours, and burnt in.

The first thing that strikes the eye in the windows of the best period of coloured glass (1200–1500) is, that the pieces of glass are so arranged and distributed as to form a kind of general brilliant mosaic of broken colour, which delights the eye from afar as a sunset does, the colours harmonising and playing into the perfect whole. This mosaic-look at once suggests the origin, wall-mosaics: it is so pronounced as to be almost confusing in very old windows; but as the art advanced there was no change in the scheme, though better drawing and better colours were introduced; the entire field was well and equally covered, and at a little distance no pattern was discernible to mislead or at once content the eye. On a nearer approach the patches of broken colour separate into subjects of increasing interest and charm, each little picture framed in stone-tracery distinct and well-contrasted, yet all the subjects being about equal in *value* of colour. The Bible heroes and angels are clearly defined, treated with a simplicity often amusing. If you climb up close to the window, or reach it by walking along the clerestory—as how many a poor man, or unlettered noble, must have done listening to the good priest's exposition of the looming meanings!—more and more details appear: minute figures start into being; every bit of colour falls into robe or crown or wing, and

is doubly accounted for; delicate borderings, naïve details over and above the mere visibility of the subject startle us into fresh admiration and surprise. A strong opera-glass shows this without the trouble of ascent. Yet on dropping the glass, and moving far away again, the soft, shapeless, but beautiful mosaic melts into sunrise or sunset, or dusky colour once more—an indistinguishable whole. Thus the old windows offer three points of view in which to be thrice admired.

Some people fancy that this is owing only to the defective knowledge and skill of the old artists; but it seems probable that on the contrary the glass-painters knew and felt the double interest attaching to colour *per se* and colour as the vehicle of thought, and succeeded in giving *both* in their treatment of window-decoration. The difficulty of fusing large sheets of glass in old times may have partly accounted for the absence of large masses of plain colour; still they must have known (as we know directly we try the experiment) that small pieces of glass can be arranged in a far more interesting and surprising manner than large sheets. Even latticed windows are more beautiful than big panes, because the pattern of the leading carries decoration into a place where we moderns admit none. The coloured cathedral windows are often masterpieces of art-ingenuity which, without greatly excluding light, invest the whole gorgeous fabric of Gothic architecture with a 'dim religious' charm, no doubt indispensable to harmony when the cathedrals were new, and internally coloured throughout as richly as the Alhambra itself; but even now, in their semi-whitewashed condition of renovated old age, the old

windows remain the one link of living colour that revives the keynote of the whole.

Modern Painted Glass.

Now that we have unlimited command of knowledge and methods, we find that the treatment of windows as oil-paintings, with rounded figures and apparent prominences, is false in motive and bad in effect, and we are forced to go back to the early masters for hints whenever we wish to succeed. We find that small pieces of glass, or a general treatment of a similar effect to that of small pieces of glass, are necessary to give that repose in mere colour which the old windows present when viewed from a distance. A transparent picture, equally visible far or near, wearies; it also diminishes the apparent size of the building, as a too conspicuous wall-paper does; and drawing the eye from details of sculpture near it, which ought to be just equally visible, no more, no less, destroys the unity of the *ensemble*. We are driven back to the old manner of trebling pleasure by interesting the eye from three points —distance, in mere colour; propinquity, in colour ranging itself into subjects and devices; close scrutiny, with a field-glass, in minute, unending detail of tender and quaint handwork.

The costly Munich windows in Peter House, Cambridge, are an instance of the worst blunders in window decorating; they create a breach in the wall, and the treatment is too finikin to excuse the faults in style.

Burne Jones's lovely window in Christ Church, Oxford,

and some of his in St. Peter's and Jesus Chapels, Cambridge, are instances of modern glass treated in the spirit of the old glass; it is somewhat 'flat,' and the figures conventional, but the colour and the treatment are most poetic and sweet. Much of Cottier's glass is extremely fine both in design and colour; Powell has six windows in St. James's Church, Marylebone, of considerable and quite peculiar beauty; nor must we omit to note as good windows some in Ely Cathedral, by Clayton and Bell, Lucton, and Wales of Newcastle.

At the same time much of the finest sixteenth-century glass is far from 'flat,' without being exactly shaded into roundness like modern Munich glass, than which, generally speaking, nothing can be more tasteless and ill drawn. The broad shadows dear to Renascence artists are brought in by dark masses of colour, but so skilfully that the eye is not annoyed by false appearance, and bold as the treatment is, the mosaic-look and broken colour are present when we gaze from a distance. Probably their recognition of the merits of this distant effect was the cause of their preference, as a rule, for small pictures instead of large and conspicuous figures.

Among the honourable names of glass-painters are those of Albert Durer, Franz Floris, called the Flemish Raphael, Domenico Pecori, Bernard de Palissy, Van Dyck (father of the painter), Gerard Douw, Dardennes de Chartres, who has left lovely work at Rouen, R. van der Weyde, Dirck and Wouter Crabeth, Henry Gyles of York, Michael Coxcie, Raphael's pupil, Jean Cousin, Lambert Lombard, who painted the beauteous windows in Lich-

field Cathedral, which are among the finest existing of the Flemish Italian school, and many more.

Coloured Windows at Home.

In England, where so much of life is of necessity passed indoors; in London and all large towns, where the outlook is so uninteresting or so ugly as to be commonly outside the question of taste—why do we use so little painted glass? Why have we not fair pictures to look at, stories written in light and colour, to give the inmates some more pleasurable ideas than black chimney pots or wet slates? In early England coloured glass was the most beautiful ornament they could devise for their windows, the crown of their superb architectural effects; it was too costly for any but princes and the Church, and in the Church it survives to show us what they meant by it—but it had no exclusively religious significance, it was associated only with beauty and wealth. In 'Chaucer's Dream' we read of

> A chamber peynt
> Ful of stories olde and diverse;

and of the fair bird which, in its fear of the aged knight, took wing, missed the opening,

> That backeward downe he fel
> From a window richely peynte
> With lives of many divers seynte,

and broke the window. And Chaucer speaks of an Isle

> Where wal and gate was al of glasse.

That the beauteous carvings abounding in the archi-

tecture of the fourteenth century were coloured to imitate nature, Chaucer's words may again be quoted to prove; likewise the decorative 'conceits,' as bird-shaped weathercocks, which with beaks open 'against the air' produced a sound like birds singing.

> For every yate,[1] of fine gold,
> A thousand fanes, ay turning
> Entuned had, and briddes[2] singing
> Diverse: and on eche[3] fane a paire
> With open mouthe, again the aire.
> And of a sute[4] were alle the floures,
> Of uncouth[5] colours, during ay,
> That never bene none[6] sene in May.

Alas, May's colours do *not* 'dure' for aye. Stephen Hawes also describes this use of fanes—

> Aloft[7] the toures the golden fanes goode
> Dyde[8] with the wynde make ful sweete armony.

It is quite certain that colour and glitter were sought by all who could afford it, and it was afforded by the Church in honour of God, as it was by the wealthier citizen in honour of himself. Why have we, rich or no, forgotten the charms of colour, and especially translucent colour, and banished it from our home surroundings? Why does the careless eye admit the most glowing tints on sofa and chair seats without feeling the want of it on our blank spaces of cold wall, and, above all, in our vast vacant windows?

Because, most persons will say, painted glass excludes the light, and all light that can be got is indispensable

[1] Gate. [2] Birds. [3] Each. [4] Suit. [5] Strange, foreign. [6] Such as are never. [7] Above. [8] Did.

in a London street. This objection does not apply to the many country-houses where coloured windows would be a vast improvement, but it is certainly true of many town-streets. It is, however, answered by the fact that much of the good modern glass, such as the pale diaper-patterned kind provided by Clayton and Bell, Morris and Powell—and providable by any intelligent glass manufacturer—does not exclude light. In certain positions it occasionally even *adds* light, owing to the refractive property of uneven surfaces. It is not as interesting, of course, as glass artistically painted in subjects, but it is very useful as a screen, and often an ornament of considerable beauty.

Amateur Efforts.

But the windows are a legitimate field for the exercise of original taste—not only the frames and sashes, which may be regarded as distinct from the panels or shutters—but even those broad white panes which we dare not always get rid of even when we have begun to dislike them, and to realise that there is absolutely no '*view*.' If you have not the surplus daylight to be able to venture upon heavy, deep-tinted Titianesque subjects, the plain broad panes of plate-glass may be simply, and as scantily as you please, outlined in yellow, brown, or any colour, in slight subjects which are better than nothing, and which would not interfere with the rare impulse to look out of the window. People indeed do not look out of windows greatly in London, the reason being obvious; but, at any rate, with windows so slightly decorated we

could afford a passing glance, however busy within, at Enid riding before her lord—or Autumn scattering the leaves of Summer—or simple blades of grass and butterflies dancing on the vacant pane; and when we hurried perchance to the window to follow the motive of some casual street fray, or to watch a funeral procession, or a drove of sickly cattle, or to satisfy impatient curiosity as to what visitor is on the doorstep, or what cats are on the leads, or whatever induces people to look out of the window in London—these slender outlines of Enid, or Autumn, or grass blades would not shut out one spicy detail in the external world.

This mode of decoration would, I think, have the additional merit of being inconspicuous enough not to tire the eye by perpetually attracting it; and the upper part of the window might be left untouched if preferred so as to show the whole sky, if any be visible from the position of the house.

This would also offer a pleasing employment to idle young ladies at home, who could trace a pretty device in opaque enamel from a transparent pattern pasted outside the pane, whether they have much idea of drawing or not, and it would be better than making cardboard mats or gumming gold-paper around photographs.

Whether done at home or by a glass decorator, the mode is simple enough, as I described with full details in the 'Queen' of January 31, 1880. The design is simply traced in outline with a thick enamel paint which lies on common window glass perfectly well, and it may be as simple or as elaborate as is wished.

When the paper pattern outside the window is re-

moved, the effect is really very pretty of these transparent and slight pictures, just sufficient to obliterate a bad look-out without really obliterating a good one. It can be washed with care, whenever the windows require cleaning, and can be entirely removed by turpentine. Outlines in scarlet, or in brown and amber tints, are very effective for this purpose; and if wished the outlines can of course be filled in with transparent flat colour for a richer effect.

Glass screens, by Powell or Cottier, are a commoner way of making a blind without disusing the plain glass which belongs to one's house. These add considerably to the weight of the sash, but most difficulties can be obviated by a little ingenuity.

Glass Partitions and Screens.

Coloured glass worked after the fashion of old windows is not enough used for door-panels, and even walls of rooms where light is wanted on the staircase. Many modern aesthetic houses follow the affectation of dark staircases quite disagreeably. I have made the ascent in red-brick mansions in such obscurity that every step had to be felt for, and ideas of spiders, beetles, and mice are inseparable from this unwholesome darkness. In such cases the builders' folly may be remedied by a wall, or part of a wall, built of translucent glass, with a pretty leading—not so translucent as to destroy privacy, of course; and more than once I have seen a landing so built around as to form a charming glass corridor, in fact a new room, more brilliant than

any other, and twice as sturdy as most. Thick glass, well leaded, is stronger than lath and plaster. The sense of mystery, a striking element in Gothic charm, may be conveyed to very humdrum places by well-arranged coloured glass. There is a sense of freedom and space within glass walls which confess to something beyond, whilst softly veiling what is there, and they are more easily ventilated than others. How many a room would be improved by a ceiling of such glass, skylight-wise, when the windows are distant and small! and numberless pretty, decorative devices occur, in glass pictures lighted from behind at night, small illuminated niches of brilliant colour, to say nothing of conservatories and ferneries and balconies, so guarded.

Such tasteful fashions should soon banish the dull grey patch of ground-glass, starred or plain, that builders always place on the staircase, sometimes cheered up by panes—of course most garish colours—through which we may take a 'blue' or jaundiced view of sparrows and cats on the leads. But, in view of many dire failures in 'Queen Anne' suburban villas run up by speculative builders, I must add, if you cannot have first-rate stained glass, adhere to simple lozenge forms—avoid the heads of Dante, Chaucer, and Cetewayo, and all else that requires an artistic training—and above all eschew the false 'old English' mottoes which are so dismally repugnant to a scholar; such as 'Yee Sunne Flowere,' 'Yee Pusse inne Bootes,' 'Yee Gurle withe yee Umbrellah.'

CHAPTER IV.

ON MIRRORS.

Pallor not Light.

PEOPLE who love light are often shy of the increasing fashion of colouring the walls, ceilings, and floors of rooms. They say not untruly that in London there is too little light for us to dispense with any, and that all colouring which tends to darken the rooms is a mistake in a town. But it seems to me that these people confuse the meaning of light and brightness. Mere pallor is not light-giving—a room papered, ceiled, and furnished with white would offer us no more advantages during one of the rich brown fogs of our dear native isle than one coloured with however deep a crimson or purple. If the windows are small and blocked by adjoining walls, the internal reflection of slate-coloured skies (and remember that white is not white in a room, it is every tint of grey, through shadow and dirt) will not make the atmosphere more luminous; while a room furnished tastefully with

bright and rich colours, a good many mirrors, and bright objects, such as china, brass, and silver, really does refract light by contrast and by reflection.

What not to do.

One of the fixed laws of the admirers of the false Queen Anne style of room is the enmity to mirrors, only proper and wise if everyone in the house is a fright. One enthusiastic votary of this effete reaction actually recommends the 'unfortunate possessors' of lofty mirrors 'to cut the plate into oblong fragments; and adds, 'if strong unwillingness should exist to have large plates of glass cut into pieces,' an alternative remains, 'an ebonised oak or walnut frame altogether enclosing and dividing by cross pieces the surface of the glass into compartments, and leaving perhaps one uninterrupted oblong piece, about 18 inches high at the bottom, with a trellis work of shelves and brackets'—for books and china!

Here is the most *bornée* incapacity to appreciate really good elements, or to know what to do with them when they have got to be used. It would really seem, were these people reliable, that all wall-mirrors are an abomination, unless they not only refuse to repeat pretty objects, but actually go out of their way to create hideous ones, convex mirrors of the 'Empire' time alone being admitted in such 'æsthetic' houses.

Probably this desire to mortify the flesh was the logical accompaniment of the ascetic tendency of the early nineteenth century, the period now pitched back-

ward 100 years, and praised under the fancy name of Queen Anne. At any rate it is certain that you cannot tie on your bonnet straight in this kind of house, for you may wander from room to room without finding so much as a span-wide mirror; but you may be wholesomely reminded of the ills which flesh is heir to by that convex horror supported by a most inadequate eagle, and wherein you see your brow or jaw swell sickeningly, your

FIG. 42.—What Helen of Troy would appear in a convex mirror

eye burst forth or your mouth protrude, according to the position in which you place your devoted head. Only the meanest spite could wish the youngest and prettiest guests to see themselves like this.

However low our opinion of our friends' looks, or our own, tact forbids that we should placard it on our walls. Queen Elizabeth banished her mirror in her dismal old age because she did not know how to grow old gracefully. However, whether this practice spring

from sick vanity or misanthropy, I repudiate it. I humbly study the art of beautifying home, not uglifying it, hence perhaps am behind the times (wherefore I give thanks); for in my opinion a good mirror is undoubtedly an ornament, as I have shown in a 'Louis XIV. Room.' It is one which of course can be abused—the vast mirrors which invariably accompany the coarse gilt consoles in the house of every vulgar Crœsus have disgusted us all, and the accidents to persons who have run heedlessly into looking-glasses, supposing them to be openings to new rooms, are sufficiently authentic to enjoin care in the arrangement of sheets reaching the ground. Nevertheless, a mirror, properly mounted and protected, greatly adds to the size of a room; it certainly reflects light in almost any position, it opens quaint and unexpected vistas to the eye, it doubles the number of fair faces present, and the curious mystery which pervades the world 'through the looking-glass,' inaccessible, yet so near, is not without its charm to grown-ups as well as to children.

Old Mirrors.

A mirror of black glass, reflecting objects only when it is moistened, has been recently found in a newly-excavated house at Pompeii; therefore we now know that the ancients were not ignorant of something beside polished metal for mirrors. But the secret was no doubt afterwards lost, and for a great while, and it was only gradually rediscovered. Mediæval mirrors were first made of glass at Venice, but though as early as 1507

two Murano glassworkers, Andrea and Domenico, declared before the Council of Ten that they had discovered a method of making 'good and perfect mirrors of crystal glass,' plates larger than 4 or 5 feet were never made until one hundred years ago, and they were always cast square or oblong until the end of the seventeenth century.

The Venetian glassworkers established at Lambeth by the Duke of Buckingham, whose mirrors Evelyn praised, gave their plates a gently bevelled edge, an inch in width, which adds to the value and beauty of the glass considerably; it is of extreme difficulty in execution, the plate being held by the workman above his head, and the edge ground at a *slight* angle. Modern bevelling is too acute, and the ancient feats of skill in the form of interrupted curves, and short lines and angles, are beyond our workmen. Presently figures were sunk in the style of intaglio, or gem-cutting, on the back of the glass and left dead, so that the silver surface of the mercury shows in white ornaments at front, or the hollows were burnished in jewel-like patterns.

Glass was no doubt made in England long before the seventeenth century, but we have no record of the workers. As early as 1447 John Prudde, of Westminster, engaged to execute the windows of the Beauchamp chapel at Warwick, and to use 'no glasse of England' (which sounds condemnatory). Stowe and Richard Hakluyt speak of 'glasses of English making' in and about 1580, but these were for domestic purposes, not mirrors, and doubtless Italian glass was superior.

Buckingham's glass-factory must have achieved a

tremendous success. We hear that 'Sir Samuel Morland built a fine room at Vauxhall in 1667, the inside all of looking-glass and fountains, very pleasant to behold.' Pennant writes that the house of Nell Gwynne, 'the first good one as we enter St. James's Square from Pall Mall, had the back room on the ground floor entirely lined with looking-glass within memory, as was said to have been the ceiling.' Mme. D'Aulnoy places her Princess in such a room, as it was impossible to reflect too often her charming countenance; and a room, so panelled in small pieces, with beautifully wrought and gilded seams, must have been beautiful. Mr. Tyssen Amherst possesses two especially pretty old mirrors, *temp.* Louis XIV. and Louis XV., in which the joins are made a perfect ornament.

Painted Mirrors.

The practice of painting upon mirrors, common in Italy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, is one which we must allude to in passing. Contrary as it seems to our notions of good taste, this fashion of decorating large sheets of metal is by no means disagreeable if the work will bear the same criticism as a framed picture on canvas. The finest specimens I have seen are those in the Stanza degli Specchi, in the Borghese Palace at Rome, where sheets of glass, as large as were then made, are covered with loves and wreaths life-size by Girofri and Mario dei Fiori. The false vista thus created is peculiarly Italian: witness those less pleasing works which turn a house-side into a distant

landscape, or fill blind openings with ladies and lovers upon balconies, pardonable only when we remember the Italian love for pleasant garden-images everywhere! Still, a room lined with painted mirrors is really pretty, brilliant, and festive, as roses suspended in the air, and visited by busy birds or bees, may fairly make it. It is a fashion so totally independent of the rigid canons of to-day that it is unjust to judge it by them. The extended area of the walls deceives the eye in one place, but the objects painted on it recall the mind to a right sense of distance and prevent accidents to shortsighted persons. There is a room so painted at the British Embassy at Rome, and, prejudice aside, the effect is good. The silvery lights reflected in the mirrors are intercepted by colour, and all the possible bareness of the vast sheet disappears. Flowers in natural wreaths are preferable to cupids; and both are preferable to the destruction of mirrors or their concealment by irrelevant books and teacups; but, as the eye is even more constantly drawn to a painted mirror than an ordinary picture, by reason of its brightness, taste demands that the painting should be nothing less than first-rate.

Mirror-frames.

A mirror always deserves a good frame, which should be either massive or dispersed in filigree after the manner of the old seams. The frame of so conspicuous an object *must* be well designed. Avaunt the clumsy, writhing frames in gold, nuggets which we have our suspicions of even when wrapped up in yellow muslin! But a

frame properly designed to suit the wall, either in gold and colour, or gold and certain woods, carved or painted, can be made a seemly ornament. If we were ambitious we might take hints from many ancient mirrors, or the frames of old panels. The bronze and ormolu enrichments which came in under Louis XIV., laid on ebony and tortoiseshell and white metal, are well applied to mirror-frames, when they are moderate, and do not wriggle as we look at them. A large mass of gilding always looks better when variegated in colour, as the eighteenth-century French artists felt when they decorated their palace panels and frames with gold, of a yellow or a green hue. The green was largely alloyed with silver, and silver itself was employed for a whitish effect. Inlaid frames are generally inoffensive, and may be very graceful in design.

I think that much of the contumely cast on large mirrors is traceable to their association with vulgar frames. It is impossible to believe that, had the ancients possessed the art of casting broad sheets of magnificent glass, a discovery reserved for our century, they would have contemned on principle this capital instrument for surprisingly beautiful effects. No; they made beautiful objects with their limited facilities; we make hideous ones in spite of facilities unlimited. Had the artists of the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, or even old Rome, possessed this secret, they would have mounted their great mirrors in panels which would have been the admiration of the world.

Most large looking-glasses of the least objectionable kind nowadays are mounted in narrow bevelled frames,

in imitation ebony with gilt *rivets*, &c., or a slight gold rope, tied in knots above sometimes a little colour being

FIG. 43.—Venetian mirror-frame.

introduced in places. But a looking-glass of this weight and importance ought never to have a mean and meagre frame. If we look at the frames of the sixteenth century for either pictures or mirrors, we shall find that they are all broad and massive according to the weight of the enclosure they are devised to protect and set off. Carving of the boldest and most elaborate description, but always founded on a knowledge of the structural needs of the thing decorated, and worked in the hardest wood, and even wrought iron (vide p. 348), surrounds the small plates (the largest they could make), which reflected the faces of Beatrice and Mary Stuart. Silver, modelled with all the genius of a Cellini or a Holbein, sometimes protected the privileged crystal, for silver, being not too good for fire-dogs, was by no means too good for the lady's table. Some of the magnificent designs of ancient Rome, or of the Renaissance, Italian, or Flemish sixteenth-century, taken from old Roman works unearthed, and some of the best of the very poor versions of architectural styles applied to frames which the 'Empire' period gave us, and which are now run after, ought to teach us what the old meaning of a frame was. It was not merely a tidy metal edge[1] to rough canvas or panels of sharp glass, it was a 'mount;' a protection in case of a fall, and an ornament drawing attention and adding importance to the precious object enclosed.

A big mirror-frame then should seldom be less than two feet wide; and were the frame sawn out of plain

[1] Some old pictures, wherein the figures stand in a painted alcove, such as may be seen in most galleries of art, seem to suggest that frames originated in a mere metal protection to the edge of the panel.

wood, of reasonable depth and value, it would add enormously to the artistic merit of the mirror. If definitely built into the wall, china, pictures, or gems of any kind might be arranged upon the frame, which would thus partake in a reasonable manner of the mural construction, and belong to it, and it ought to be fitly coloured accordingly. Were a more fanciful class of frame preferred, and cost not begrudged, a carved copy of such a design as enshrines many a masterpiece in the Pitti or Uffizj Galleries, or tall columns with elegant bases and capitals supporting a delicately painted lintel, or perhaps an arch, would immensely add to the architectural importance of a fine room. The small mirror (*temp.* Empire) would of course bear larger proportions. All large frames meant for the wall ought to be of an architectural character; fig. 72, p. 348, and many small table-mirror frames of the French and Flemish Renascence show the proper treatment of a material so costly and beautiful as reflecting glass.

Picture-frames.

While on the subject of frames a few further suggestions may be useful. The frames that we allot to pictures even of high merit are sometimes most gaudy and destructive. Few persons consider how completely the frame forms part of the *coup d'œil* as the eye encounters a picture, and how jarring appears either an obtrusive, newly-gilt margin around a very dark old painting, or a showy frame around one whose charm lies in its pallid delicacy of colouring. A frame covered

with a minute and wearying pattern in stucco too often supports a subject full of large figures, and a 'bold' design as frequently effaces a landscape. Among artists, Mr. J. M. Whistler and Mr. Alma Tadema were among the first to give intelligent attention to their own frames. A stroll through the Pitti Palace shows us that during

FIG. 42.—'Empire' mirror.

the Renascence there was constantly some intentional connection between a picture and its frame, as there was between a mirror and its mount. The larger pictures, especially those representing life-size men and women, have invariably frames at least a foot in width and in

depth. The Madonna della Seggiola of course has much more; and in most of them the frame is a well-considered *setting* with appropriate ornaments. In one, Schiavone's 'Cain and Abel' (Pitti Palace, No. 152), this idea is carried almost too far, the frame appearing almost to echo the subject. The upper part half indicates a fierce hawk-like or owl-like head—like the dream of a bird of prey about to pounce—which admirably suits the story; and that this notion is not quite fanciful we may reason from analogy.

For instance, in No. 427, we find fishes *suggested* in just such a vague manner by the scrolls of the rather violent pattern; and an owl's head is similarly formed at the junction of the fish-heads, in such a way as that you may see it or not see it. In No. 487 this idea has been seized and carried to excess; very definite fishes are carved in heavy relief, projecting six and a half inches from the wall, and form a quite inappropriate mount. This excess of elaboration in frames seems to have followed the general bent of decaying art. In No. 429 dragons form the corners to a frame for a Carlo Dolci quite the reverse of fierce. There are frames solid, and frames of dainty open-work; frames which seem to suck in and curl round the picture, and others which, equally heavy and broad, project the picture forward and retreat to the wall. There are frames which are obtrusive without deserving scrutiny, and others which are real works of art in their poetic design and dainty finish without being obtrusive. Of the latter kind a very pretty one exists in the Uffizj Gallery, just within the door of the room which leads out of the Tribune to the right hand,

all leaves with cupids nestling in them. I myself possess as fine a one as I have ever seen, small, carved in oak, *temp.* Hen. VIII., early Renascence, representing a vine

FIG. 45.—Early Renascence frame belonging to Rev. H. R. Haweis.

with its small *young* fruit, which, being similar in colour to the leaf, are rightly represented all in one colour, the conventional gold. This is a most unobtrusive, but most

perfectly graceful and appropriate, setting for the portrait of a beautiful woman.

Use of Convex Mirrors.

I may now add, that a convex mirror *in its place*, i.e. so hung as to reflect distant objects only, and never come in contact with the face, is a pretty ornament. There is something dainty and amusing in seeing the liliputian world all alive and changing, moving across the convex surface, as one enjoys an ingenious mechanical toy, clock, or money-box, which nods at you, or crows, or what not. When a child, I held it a great and dreamy delight to walk about the floor gazing through a diminishing glass, and try now and again to run down the little hollows in the carpet of my father's painting-room. Van Eyck is fond of depicting a convex mirror in his gravest pictures, and its inly-pictured reflections carry the spectator oddly into Van Eyck's time like a dream within a dream, as you seem to catch the movement of windows or trees or seated men *behind you*, being really for the moment in that room wherein the Virgin sits and rocks her Child.

If introduced at all in our rooms, this convex mirror must not be regarded as a looking-glass, of which it possesses no qualification, but simply as an ingenious toy which sets its little panorama going for our mirth, and sometimes redoubles a ray of light.

CHAPTER V.

ON MOVABLES.

Principles.

BY furniture, or rather movables—for anything that clothes the room in any way is its furniture—we generally understand chairs, sofas, and tables; and a few words must be separately given to these necessaries, for whatever else we add, these we cannot do without.

The construction of these mechanical aids ought to be as logical as that of a great cathedral. Dress itself should be logical. The requirements of a chair must be considered, and they are: (1) to support a heavy body, (2) to be shifted with facility, (3) to be ornaments of a minor kind in themselves, (4) to afford a pleasant and 'becoming' background to the human beings likely to come in contact with them.

Nothing is more easy to say; nothing is less easy to find. The forms of chairs constantly deny the object for which they were intended; there are, however, some

which are logically well-designed and only spoilt by extraneous ornament, therefore I need not do more than draw my reader's attention to the fact that without being an architectural parody, like much French seventeenth-century furniture, chairs, sofas, and tables ought to be architecturally planned, and every thoughtful architect knows that beauty springs from utility, not empty sentiment.

Comfort and Chairs.

The desiderata in a chair would not seem to be many, but one thing we might fairly suppose indispensable—comfort. Yet this is the last thing chair-buyers think of. They are so ostentatious, or so 'æsthetic,' or so stingy, that they ask 'Is it specious?' 'Is it the newest high art?' and 'Is it cheap?' before they sit down in it and wonder 'Is it comfortable?'

Now, before all things, a chair should be easy. Yet I have known people own a set of chairs for ten years without noticing that they are so high that your feet cannot reach the ground unless you sit on the edge, or so low that the adjoining table almost comes to your shoulder; that the backs are agonising from knobs and excrescences just where they should be kind to your blade-bones, or useless through being set too far from the seat.

Some people never lean back. Either from early old-fashioned 'drilling' or a long-formed habit of self-defence, some ladies sit bolt upright in every kind of seat. To people superior to human weakness, such as

those who use kitchen Windsor chairs in their drawing-rooms (a purpose for which Windsor chairs were never intended), I do not address these hints; but to those who love beauty and comfort I say, see that your chairs are easy, and then all other good things shall be added to them.

The form, the colour, the materials ought to be good in themselves, harmonious with their surroundings, and adapted to their purpose. Without these desiderata they can never be beautiful, since beauty means fitness, and fitness implies a useful object.

The shape ought to recall, however remotely, the human form and its requirements of rest and liberty. Arms are good, but not all arms. Last of all the sharp-edged 'Chippendale' or the 'Windsor' kind, which persons who will not accept any easy seats (and perhaps are never tired) profess to enjoy. As to the latter class of chair, Mr. Eastlake was one of the first to assert that the pattern was sound, because admitting no superfluities; but neither he, nor anyone else of a sane mind, ever alleged that they were beautiful, or that they ought to be fetched up from the scullery into the drawing-room. Such chairs are strong, well-pinned, hollowed in places to suit the form, steady, easily cleansed during greasy kitchen service, and the bead, fillet, and hollow mouldings were often effective in good, close-grained wood, hand-carved. But we might as fitly hang frying-pans between our porcelain and water-colours, as associate the hard kitchen chairs with soft carpets and satin dresses. 'A place for everything and everything in its place' is a proverb which is regarded last by votaries of 'high

art,' and the modern Windsor chair, manufactured by steam in cigar-box mahogany, and heavily varnished, as we have seen them in the drawing-rooms of weak æsthetics, is an affectation which has not even originality to recommend it.

The exact angle at which the back and the arm-rests jut from the body of the chair must be carefully calculated, and calculated as far as possible to agree with a

FIG. 46.—The upholsterer's darling.

number of positions, not one only. For instance, a chair stuffed so as to receive the shoulders comfortably, but leaving a hollow in the middle of the spine (a common fault) is adapted to very few positions, and soon so further tires a tired body that he or she soon quits the chair to try another. Again, a chair stuffed to support the small of the back, but too low to receive the thrown-back head, is another imperfect instrument of rest: the

positions it accommodates are limited, hence the limit of usefulness, and the chair must be supplemented by other kinds.

And both these chairs are sure to be ugly. They are sure to be 'lumpish,' as Caliban's sea-beast, with abrupt, ungainly projections of velvet and buttons, and the legs will surely echo the immoderate curves.

The most useful and comfortable, as well as inexpensive, chair is of a simple form, which by the aid of suspended cushions or other additions can be adapted to a good many needs; and such loose cushions, in lieu of over-stuffing, add to the artistic beauty and variety of the seat, as well as the liberty of him who sits therein.

Arms are a difficult question. They are so ugly as a rule when stuffed in one place only—they are so hard when not stuffed—they hem in one's elbow as one lifts it, they hit it as it returns—that I have come to the conclusion that they are very seldom of service. In modern makes they are perhaps least offensive when in the form of simple square cushions attached to a rail; they are no doubt most beautiful when handcarven, as in the Charles I. chairs. However, in the time of Louis XIV. they managed to attain stuffing without losing the curve within; and I suppose we might again attain it. The Louis XIV. chairs earlier alluded to are comfortable and pretty. So would be this fine chair, dated about 1690, if there were a loose cushion for the back; though the dolphin arms are too suggestive of 'a very ancient and fish-like smell.' There are two fine chairs with delicate dolphin arms in the Cambridge University Library.

For my own part, I incline to think chairs and sofas ought to be made in but one or two forms, with framed

FIG. 47.—Seventeenth century chair.

seats to admit springs, which, whatever Queen Annites say, are a great improvement on solid though cushioned seats, and do not in any way interfere with the graceful construction: these seats to be wide enough to admit of any change in the fashion of dress. A seat is more picturesque when it extends beyond the body of the seated person, and affords more rest and freedom. This would not, however, apply to dining-room chairs, which we cannot afford to have wide in these days of crush-dinners.

Comfort and Beauty.

The beauty of a room is largely dependent on its comfort, for remember a room is in reality a picture as much as any painted group, and it should be criticised as such—e.g. a beautiful woman reclining on a sofa becomes for the time a part of the sofa, and the sofa part of her. Is it not best that the sofa should therefore be beautiful, so as at least not to add an ugliness to her during the transient association, though it may be unable to contribute a charm? It *will*, however, generally contribute a charm in the eyes of a cultivated spectator.

No artist would place an ill-formed piece of furniture in this juxtaposition, for coarse colour in a sofa cushion takes the position of an unbecoming bonnet against her cheek—of a destructive gown against her arm or waist.

Some women instinctively avoid the chair which clashes with their garments—instinctively select the tea-cup that offers dainty contrast; *not* through self-consciousness, but from some inchoate habitual wish to be

pleasant. The gown can do without the chair, it is to be hoped, the hand can dispense with the tea-cup; but the association, however brief, has given its little pleasant mark to the sociable *ensemble*, as a sweet phrase or chord contributes to the whole song, and it is not necessary that the chord should be perpetual—*au contraire*.

Ergo, tea-cups and chairs are worth making pretty.

I pray those readers whose opinions on the propriety of art-dressing have been at all moulded by French sentiment, to observe that the calculation of a coquette is not to be confounded with the instinct of the artistic temperament. They may exist together, but they are not one and the same, happily, and do exist apart. That there is no vice in trying to please, whilst there *is* a kind of cruelty in indifference to the feelings and likings of others, whether the liking of the eye, or any other bent to which they have grown sensitive. And observe also that a vulgar language of tints and trimmings such as that suggested in a certain well-known French book is as far from being desirable—perhaps even possible—in clean English society as it is destructive of the healthy balance on which real beauty hangs.

Nothing will so soon discourage (by making superfluous) any morbid pricking vanity in choice, as having *all* details fairly beautiful and well-planned in the 'background.'

Materials and Framework.

It is matter for regret that our ideas are so *bornées*, and our upholsterers so obstinate, else why are the materials for our chairs limited to wood, iron, and stuffs? There are many materials besides wood which are very well adapted for our seats, and may be mounted *on* wood, if you will, but at the same time exhibiting new shades of colour, and offering a broad field to art.

For instance, why is not ivory oftener used for such purposes? I do not demand an ivory chair like that on which the great Rameses II. is seated in the bas-relief of Khélabshee, in Nubia, of which there is a cast in the British Museum, and in which it is easy to surmise whence the ivory chairs came, from the faces of the bearers—internal Africa. But ivory, or even bone, might be used, inlaid in large masses, and, mixed with ebony, mock ebony, or joined by metal, would not only form in itself a most elegant and picturesque aspect, but it would offer a surface for decoration such as no painted wood can do. Ivory in plates a few inches long might be painted and gilt, as in Hispano-Moorish work, where the colouring lasts well, protected by outstanding edges; or it might be etched with simple arabesques, or small human figures, as in the small seventeenth-century Italian cabinet-work, which, rough as they are, are most effective and picturesque. This idea is one which the larger furniture firms might take up with advantage; and occupation might be given to hundreds of needy art-students who could scrape in a little landscape or

figure with greater facility and less risk than painting tiles and tea-cups.

Embossed leather, such as the James I. chairs, might be designed for chair backs and seats.

Brass of course will occur to all Grecomaniacs as a beautiful ornament to our chairs and tables. In the time of the Empire the Imitation Greeks actually adopted it from the school they worshipped. They built mahogany chairs, of a semi-Greek shape, or straddling stools and tables, and adorned the feet with lion's claws in brass. This was a good idea, and when the brass was new it had a pretty effect, but, like those lovelier brasses covering the exquisite seats which adorned Pompeii, the colour flies, not into a delicate green mould, but into a dingy colourless rust, in which no pattern is remarkable and no modelling worth notice.

FIG. 48.—Greek chair: prototype of the common English form.

The marqueterie chairs with lyre backs (a form derived from old Greece and Rome), imported so largely from French, Italian, and Dutch workshops in the last century and subsequently copied here, are sometimes graceful, especially the light yellow satin-wood, and might be adapted to moderate stuffing. Some of the old Italian chairs, speckled with ivory and pearl inlaying, are quaint and decorative, though not always easy, e.g., the

present design, and the richness of their material adapts them to refined surroundings and richly-clad denizens. Folding and Glastonbury patterns might be revived, improved on by modern mechanism. An architectural chair, which might be a lesson to us, is preserved at

FIG. 49.—Italian Renascence chair: the decadence.

Barcelona. It is made of silver, the supports representing window tracery in open-work, with three lofty gables, crocketed outside and cusped within, surmounting the back. Embossed or stamped leather in lieu of hot and fusty velvets might be more used for elegant chairs with

advantage, and the designing might occupy many a deserving but needy art-student.

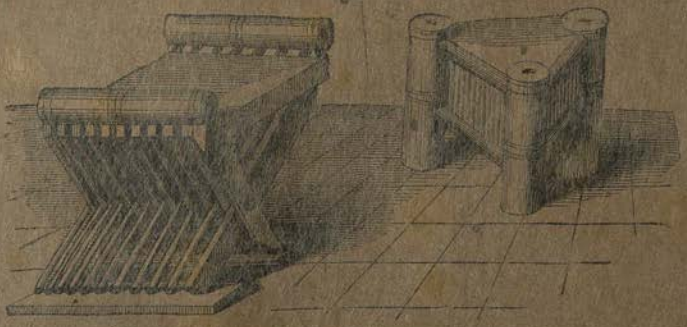

Fig. 50.—Fourteenth-century seats.

The famous chair of Dagobert, of which a copy is preserved in the South Kensington Museum, may offer

Fig. 51.—Chair of Dagobert, in the Louvre, dated about 630.

hints: the seat when furnished would be quite curved. So may the more ascetic fourteenth-century seats engraved.

We owe many lovely designs to India, whence Italy originally received the art of marquetry. The elaborate Bombay carving is very effective, like black lace on end, but it does not look well dusty, and in London it is seldom otherwise. Some of the Oriental bamboo chairs are extremely picturesque.

FIG. 31.—Chair of Assyrian character on a bas-relief from Nimrûd, in the British Museum.

Veneering is unsatisfactory in theory, but so many fine effects have been produced through veneer, such as tarsia work, from classic times to our own, that we must not be hypercritical.

The ivory wardrobes mentioned in the 45th Psalm, whatever they were, must have been veneered. Venetian pillars cased in malachite and lapis lazuli, recur to us as suggestive of effects for portions of modern seats. Old Egypt, like old Greece, is full of hints, which we may study in the British and South Kensington Museums. The small inlaid Roman sella can be easily copied, and forms a pretty stool or seat, cushioned. The old Greek folding-stool, the sculptured seat (evidently cushioned and fringed) of Nineveh, need not dismay an intelligent

modern upholsterer; and it is reasonable, while demanding sumptuous walls to enclose Beauty, to claim something like splendour for the seat that shall enthrone her, and chryselephantine effects, without gold and real tusk, are obtainable by well-chased brass and bone, which excite no cupidity whilst improving our rooms.

A little trouble on the part of the present public and

FIG. 53.—Stool, in sculpture, from Nineveh.

FIG. 54.—Ancient sella, or low seat.

their suppliers, a little education, and enthusiasm for something higher than the immediate money return, would give us nineteenth-century *objets de vertu* worthy to rank with those of Louis XIV. or any other period of art-encouragement. And it would 'pay,' for those who care for beauty of design and construction are usually ready to give a good price for it, and they set the fashion gradually. Such furniture as I have suggested would be a more consistent environment than Spartan shapes, which are radically unfitted for frames enervated by

luxury and by high culture, and whose use cannot check but rather increases weakness by denying it rest.

In spite of an imminent scream I maintain that we are as a nation more dependent on luxuries, in fact less able to endure discomfort, than we were some centuries ago; and no doubt every nation, as it rises in the scale of culture, and grows wealthy, does become so far enervated as to like comfort. The increased culture is able to devise new modes of enjoyment and relief, but it only devises them because they are called for by new wants; and much as I deplore physical weakness and the habit of self-indulgence, and however sure I am that moderate rough-living, or the power at any rate to do without luxury if necessary, is a nobler and grander state than dependence on increasing refinements, I feel that we must take life as we find it, without trying to force ourselves into an ill-fitting mould; and I am sure that the severe temper of the early part of the present century, like that of the Puritan revival, dealt many an injury to the health and happiness of the young and delicate rising generation, to say nothing of its comfort. Nineteenth-century spines are not adapted to span-broad seats and straight backs—nor to a perpetual pen in the collar for the uplifting of the chin—nor even to the cherished backboard, which rendered girls the reverse of straight and strong. What is wanted is daily exercise, good air, well-planned change of work and recreation, sufficient but not heavy feeding, and and ease and comfort within fit limits in our homes, to repair the waste involved in hard mental labour, late hours in a vitiated atmosphere, and sedentary and

other unhealthy habits, which I fear cannot be suddenly given up.

A really comfortable sofa or chair often puts to flight a bad headache, a bad backache, or a bad humour, and, this admitted, I may go on without hesitation to exhort the public, if only for the sake of those who have to live with them, to collect every variety of chair and sofa that is comfortable, so as to allow of varying positions and relief to their poor skeletons; and further, for the good repute of art in England, to see that the chairs and sofas are pretty objects in themselves. Note that lumpishness in stuffing does not add to comfort—six inches depth of wadding is in reality no whit softer than two inches. The object of stuffing is to destroy the hardness of the internal wood-frame; and, so long as this is effected, the result in comfort is the same whatever the depth, and too great a mass of wool, so much indeed as to demand holding in place by buttons, is no more but considerably less luxurious than a smaller mass well laid without buttons. These dropsical velvet and satin monstrosities, which the ordinary upholsterer turns out by the thousand, use up more material to cover the humps of horsehair, last no better, and are hideous; a good spring-seat covered with a *little* wool, and handsome silk or tapestry, uninsulated by buttons, requires less material and is far more comfortable.

Colour.

I have already given a few new ideas for the ornamenting of the frames, introducing new colours and a higher

class of decoration. I may now suggest that the colour of the cover of a sofa or chair be never harsh nor even very bright, as it should always be subservient to the various and quite incalculable hues which will be contributed by whoever sits upon it. Helbronner's and Morris's velvets and chintzes are therefore very reliable, as they are always fine in colour, often in pattern; and if the materials sent out by these firms are too dear, even when weighed with their really durable quality, it is a good plan to have old stuffs dyed to match patterns of theirs, which can be done by every sensible dyer, and at a reduced outlay of money.

The recent fashion of covering chair-seats with exquisite antique silks, old brocades, and delicate featherwork, is a waste of good things which were better applied elsewhere. Not that chair-seats may not be beautiful. The delicate Gobelin tapestries which cover Louis XIV. chairs and lounges are quite in place, pictorial as they are, because Gobelin tapestry is a strong serviceable fabric, and soon tones down in flat colour; but if the decoration of the room, as sometimes happens, depends upon the chair seats, if these are gems finer than the robes of the ladies, or the hangings of the wall, there is evident waste of force going on when the room is occupied by guests. In short, people who nurse this hobby forget that chairs are to be sat upon, and that when put to this ignoble use you cannot see the seats.

The form of chairs (i.e. the framework) might be immensely varied, were sculpture and inlaying introduced; and, were the material of the frame handsomer, no doubt

improved decoration would follow. But the general form of a chair should be considered before the details, and we may cull new forms from old sculptures and old paintings innumerable if we look about.

The well-known chair in Raphael's Madonna della Seggiola, in the Pitti Gallery—a folding-chair with decorative posts, apparently connected by a handsome strap, not a rail, common in the sixteenth century—has never to my knowledge been copied; it would be a very agreeable seat. The chair of Sesostris is one of the most beautiful designs I have ever seen; its supports, probably of ivory and metal are far more picturesque and elaborate, and full of more developed thought than any Greek or Roman seats even in the Naples Museum, which offers so many beautiful forms. The main outline of the Greek and Roman chairs does not greatly vary, while the bronze decorations are full of thought, humour, and art-knowledge; but the chair of Sesostris, like all Egyptian art, is, I think, radically superior to the Greek, because the construction is rather architectural than æsthetic. The seat and back, whatever the original was made of, might be exactly reproduced in stuffed velvet or silk; a spring-seat is not inconsistent, and the supports (they

FIG. 55.—Chair of Sesostris.

cannot be called legs), representing captives, would admit of an infinite variety in colour and decoration.

Weight.

The weight of a chair has some bearing upon its comfortableness. Some chairs, for dining-room use, are so heavy that it requires a great effort, or the assistance of another person, to pull them to the table. Others, in the drawing-room, are allowed to be so light that they seem to fall over if your eye strikes them—foolish gilt cane baubles, never meant for use. Such weight and such lightness are a perpetual nuisance. There is no more annoying accident than the oversetting of a chair, and nothing more irksome than imprisonment in a seat which will not obey our wish to shift it. A light chair is in many ways more convenient than a heavy one, but the propensity to fall over is not entirely due to paucity of material. It is often because the seat is too small for its height from the ground, and because the legs are fixed perpendicularly to it instead of at an angle giving more purchase to the floor. A wide square seat will admit of perpendicular legs; but it stands to reason that a small seat upheld by perpendicular legs, without sufficient wood in them to make up in weight what is faulty in construction, must fall over at a touch. Some of the vile parodies of high-backed Stuart chairs fall over whenever the sitter rises, heavy as they look. The sixteenth- and seventeenth-century chairs on their perpendicular legs were ponderous by mass of wood, and furthermore the seats were large, often concave. Nothing can be

steadier. Some fragile 'Chippendale' (?) chairs are steady, but in these cases the legs diverge slightly and the sharp feet stick fast in the carpet. The height of a chair must be proportioned to the plane of its seat in

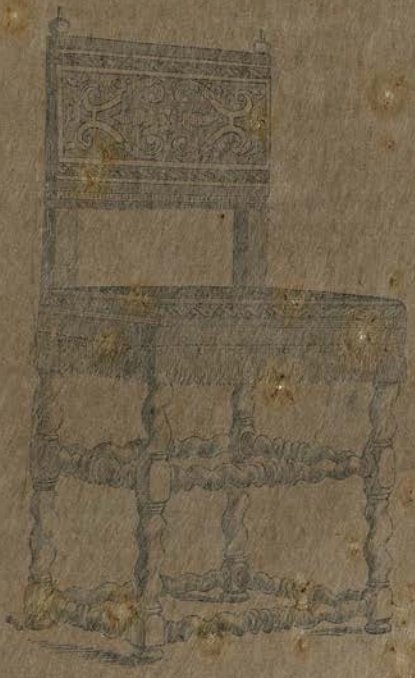

FIG. 56.—Seventeenth-century chair.

order to afford that security which everyone who trusts his body on it has a right to demand—but this is one of the many secrets hidden from the British upholsterer!

The chairs which became fashionable after the Chip-

pendale school of furniture had lost its novelty and its merit too, were heavy enough, with large seats covered with horsehair. Only when the monotony of the few forms and straight lines used had become intolerable, did impatient 'taste' fling itself upon curves for relief, and encourage the 'solicitous wrigglings' of the modern Louis XV. chairs.

Sofas.

Sofas ought to be as a rule simply enlarged chairs, they ought not to represent beds. There have been many very ingenious forms invented in modern days, but almost all have been spoilt by the inveterate habit of over-stuffing and pulling in with buttons. The S-shaped settee, in which two people sit on opposite sides and face one another, *might* be made a very pretty piece of furniture. The S might be more elegantly curved, and the upper rail might be well wadded with a smaller amount of material. The seats should be low, and deep enough to admit of a good plunge into them; and given a proper contrast of materials, wood and silk, or metal and velvet, or cane and satin, or whatever the choice be, there would be nothing to urge against its picturesqueness as a sofa. It is at present, however, for the most part a shapeless-looking red machine which only forms one item of the ugly 'drawing-room suite.'

A very simple, almost severe, form which may be seen at Knole House is much to be commended. In spite of its straight lines, it is a most luxurious resort, and its broad surfaces admit of patterns in silk or velvet

far finer than what we are accustomed to see in drawing-rooms. The fringes (almost all fringes are beautiful) are clearly seen, not smothered by jutting lumps and creases, and all the lines are good and satisfactory to the eye.

Empire sofas, like Empire chairs, are not usually comfortable, even when the horsehair is replaced by something softer. I have already said that the mood of that time was adverse to pleasure, and those Chippendale admirers who are so run away with by this 'Empire' hobby as to assert that these high heavy seats are pleasing, deny the very spirit which brought them forth. They were meant to be good artistically and mechanically—they were meant to be Greek; they are for the most part neither Greek nor good, neither convenient nor comfortable. But, compared with the horrible 'shaped' monstrosities seen in the shops, they are quiet, severe, at any rate a change, and their angularity and plain dark colour and castorless legs win indulgence on account of the careful and temperate ornament and slender strength which characterise the best examples of this time.

For the most part simple forms, adapted to various bodily attitudes by loose cushions, are preferable, this is because they are more manageable and more restful to the eye. Fitness to its purpose is one of the tests of beauty, and a chair or sofa should be judged like a dress or a house, by the laws of appropriateness and pleasure.

But when I say simple forms, I do not mean without ornament, for extraneous ornament is only objectionable when it misses or confuses the original intention of the thing decorated, and is only dangerous in ignorant hands.

FIG 57.—Old French sofa, in the possession of Lake Ionides, Esq.

The fine old French sofa (*temp.* Louis Quinze) belonging to Mr. Luke Ionides, may be cited as an example. The primary idea, that of a low oblong couch, is not lost by the additional decorations, which are all in the direction of defining, not disguising it. This sofa is at once a beautiful ornament and a luxurious refuge. It belongs to the date when Madame de Pompadour's taste became classic, and there is no detail in its elaborate yet never obtrusive ornament but deserves study. Its refined form, its height, proportions, and workmanship are perfect. The quaint swans and the wreath of oak-leaves are conventionalised, but not unnatural; the floral ornament on the lower part is delicate and charming, though its combination with the conventional Greek 'honeysuckle,' &c., is indulgent enough.

The mahogany sofas, or rather double chairs peculiar to late Georgian taste, are far from easy, but they boast occasionally good hand-carving. The lyre back is remotely referable to the classics. I have seen some which, protected by loose cushions, and made in well-seasoned, hand-polished wood, are real ornaments in their quiet, rather solemn, fashion.

Fig. 58.—Greek sofa.

It is remarkable how like our own are some of the ancient Greek sofas or couches, or rather how Greek influence is traceable in some of our worst productions. Fig. 58, made in two contrasting woods, or wood and metal, would be a beautiful and comfortable seat. We know

what machinery and obtuseness made of this form, how it spoiled all the curves, and how different is a poor wood structure upheld on ill-turned legs from one of similar form beautifully carven out of a fine material.

As we can refer so much in the Renascence costume to classic precedent, so we can refer to it many forms in furniture not immediately pretending to be classic, just as we can in Empire time. The 'long settles'—plain flat couches six or seven feet long by three wide, stuffed with hair—which came in vogue in the seventeenth cen-

FIG. 59. Roman forms. FIG. 60.

tury, with the high square-backed chair, were precisely similar to the couches used in Ancient Egypt, save that in lieu of being supported on twisted legs the box which supported them was painted with devices, more like the Gothic hutch or settle. The Greek couch had a rail at the end, like one of the Empire forms, wherein a rail of ball pattern ran equally along three sides—rather pretty. The limbs of beasts adapted to legs of furniture, a pattern so common in Rome, ought to be modelled with extreme ability to be unobjectionable, and when the

modelled limb is debased into the mere curved support, without meaning or grace (as it was in classic times, not ours only), the effect is always that of nerveless insecurity, i.e. bad taste.

Tables.

Tables are too much neglected among us. If we would take hints for tables only from the Greeks, and beautify the furniture constantly meeting our eyes, instead of trying to use their costume, only fit for their times and climate, and their delicately moulded architecture, only visible under a bright sun and wrought in Pentelic marble, we might figure as a reasonable race of men.

No wood was too costly for the table-tops of ancient Greece and Rome. No labour was too great to keep them in order. Between the courses of the meal slaves rubbed the polished tables with oiled soft cloths. A single slab of delicately veined maple or citrus, nearly four feet across and half a foot thick; or daintily inlaid works in marble, porphyry, and ivory, nay, gold and silver, supported by ivory pillars and bronze claws, were common in old Rome, and the Renascence decorators revived the fashion. What can be a more superb table-top than that vast work in tarsia of precious stones, standing in the Borghese Stanza degli Specchi? among which stones some pieces only show you their rare glitter if you bow or kneel to catch the changing light as of rubies, or opals, or emerald fire within them.

In England, tables of metal or alabaster, porphyry, and other stones take too low a temperature to be really

pleasant to the touch, and a table, to meet its real use, must not discourage touch. Therefore delicate wood inlaying is fitter for us than stone inlaying, however vivid and tasteful. A table should not be too beauteous to use. The Louis Seize tables were toys only, like the Louis Quatorze cabinets. They would be too fragile to bear the weight of books and tea-cups; too tender to endure the hasty push of a housemaid, or even the harsh attrition of modern adulterated dress fabrics.

FIG. 61.—Silver table at Windsor Castle, time of Louis Quatorze.

The lovely silver table of which I give a cut belongs to Her Majesty the Queen, and on comparing it with the later table (*temp.* Louis Seize, on p. 162), we see how the décadence was proceeding in the direction of refinement and weakness—*diminuendo* I have elsewhere called it.

A table may be elegantly made if it stand aside, and be not put to coarse service, like a racehorse; still a table it must be and carry something.

The supports of tables might be far more varied than they are. The lumpish central support, with three

gouty promontories, has been done to death. So have the emasculated prongs which maintain a 'Queen Anne' table. The gilt stucco formed like loves and cornucopias is objectionable, for the most cherished tables, like the above-named gem in the Borghese, soon show signs of wear and tear; and everything which is eminently unpractical must be banished from such a place.

Le Pautre includes some novel designs for tables among his many plates, and various old missals give hints we could work out.

The most convenient and the most economical, and not the least pretty tables for English use, are the small oaken ones still to be found in the cottages of certain counties, some with the old ball legs in fours and eights a-row, some supported by quaint jambs of oak at each side, and always fitted with deep flaps.

Dining-tables of the 'telescope' description have been much criticised by the æsthetic, but I am sure they are the most convenient machines, and I find they never get out of order, are easy to shift and to enlarge—therefore there is no reason why they should be superseded. Their supports might be improved, of course, like everything else machine-made. Many an old Gothic or early Renascence table-dormant, in pictures and miniatures, gives us hints about the supports, which may be either 'legs' or arches.

Table legs should either splay out a little near the floor, which gives more purchase, as in a chair, when a weight is superimposed; or they should be perpendicular, moulded so as to give shadows broad enough to be visible in our gloomy atmosphere, and by no means too

slender. Smooth ivory is a material that might oftener figure in our tables, whether large or small; it is less cold than marble, and a more agreeable white. It should not be carved, but it might be incised in black, or inlaid with steel and silver in quantities small enough not to excite cupidity—though that passion overruns this country so that it is a wonder we have any bell-handles or roof-leading left! and a pretty cloth can always preserve during use or conceal if need be.

I can well understand tables growing to be a 'hobby' with collectors, but they should never be dressed in rose point and velvets like a bride. Something should be left for the mistress of the house.

CHAPTER VI.

ON MOVABLES (continued).

Carpets.

THE English carpets, famous for durability, made fifty years ago, were too hideous to deserve notice as works of art. Whilst the well-spun and well-woven worsted fully deserved the old English reputation of worth and integrity we found as we grew to see the faults in design that it would not wear out however ill-used, and many a good old Brussels carpet after being endured in the drawing-room till human nature revolted, was sent into the best bed-room; from thence into the second best; finally, as nothing would ruffle its temper, it was 'swapped' for matting and rugs, and probably still lives in some humbler dwelling, looking 'showy' and feeling comfortable to the last.

All the furniture made under the influence of the Empire was durable; this was part of their general principle of truth, and earnestly do I wish that a principle so good could be combined with pleasanter forms—

but we must not be Quixotic. The carpets were indestructible; and if, as a Queen-Annite asserted the other day, 'that which has remained to us is really worthy of study and imitation, mainly because it has remained,' it strikes me that a consistent admirer of early nineteenth-century objects ought to fit the old carpets to the old furniture and have the room correct. They are quite as perfect after fifty years' service as the emaciated tables and sideboards. And perhaps enthusiasts will yet be born to see something 'nice' about Bengal tigers and vast roses and snowdrops rearing and wriggling beneath their æsthetic feet.

Meanwhile carpets have deteriorated in quality and improved in colour. Morris's carpets, which are sometimes very pleasing, fade detestably soon; and there are few firms where durable materials seem to be united with 'high art' colours. But this is a consummation which will be granted as soon as the public devoutly insist upon it; and, putting intrinsic worth aside, we go on to examine the artistic merits to be sought in carpets.

Nothing can cultivate our eye as well as intelligent study of Oriental fabrics; not those made for the modern market, by workmen sufficiently indifferent to their traditions to accept British dyes, and so impaired by want of keeping up to their original standard that they have almost forgotten how to work minute patterns and a close web. But sufficient Oriental carpets of older date remain to guide and satisfy cultured taste, and to serve, I rejoice to say, as patterns for reproduction; and now that import duties are entirely abolished, every year is

likely to bring over more genuine old products until Turkey and India are exhausted, and that will be some time hence.

The first merit about these old carpets is that they are hand-made, which necessitates slight irregularities and 'imperfections;' which yet are more interesting than the excessive precision of machine-made goods. Irregularity in colour or web is called imperfection in the trade; but a certain imperfection seems necessary to the existence of beauty, which perishes amid the rigid parallelograms and clarifications of Science, like a wild bird in a doorless cage: and many things which machine-trained opinion calls 'spoilt' are beautiful through the very want of perfectness which is complained of. Not that bad work is in itself admirable. We must distinguish between the flights of fancy that spring from want of skill and concentration, and those derived from a strength superior to leading-strings—as also pretty accidents. But all old work shows us the impress of human minds and hands, instead of mechanical monotony. Every zigzag will be just so far irregular as a zigzag drawn by hand, not by a wheel; every spot and group will have its little individualities—as like as a pea to a pea, which is not *very* like—and every colour will be imperfect by the modern standard of distillation, for every colour will partake slightly of some other, and so there will be better harmony.

This is visible in all branches of decorative work, from carpets to china and jewellery. Approximate perfection is all we can endure in this imperfect world. Blue should be unmistakable as blue, yet it should con-

tain just enough red to bear propinquity with red, or just enough yellow to bear propinquity with green. This is like a sweetly-tempered character that can sympathise with many other minds without sacrificing its own individual principles; and such colours, soft, pliable, not aggressive and obstinate, may be called sympathetic colours.

All antique work is tinted with sympathetic colours. The rudeness of the old loom, or tool, or retort, may be responsible; but be the cause what it may, intentional or no, the result is good, and not uninstructive. When we use modern dyes, exquisitely distilled and rigidly pure, in similar combinations to the old, it will be at once seen that they are out of tune together, and irreconcilable. Our coal-tar colours look unnatural either in masses, or sudden contrast with each other, for such purity is never seen in nature save in an infinitesimal quantity instantly softened apologetically off—observe a grain of ore, a glimpse of a bird's wing, changing at the next grain or the next flash into its modified echo, or its palpitating opposite. This is why faded colours are often better than when new, their harshness has subsided.

This gentleness of character visible in antique colouring, and in antique shapes too, is very remarkable, and seems to possess a moral significance, which however does not bear pressing beyond the domain of art.

Probably because carpets were not originally intended to be trampled upon and disregarded, the ancients took the trouble to design beautifully for them and carry them out carefully. In the East the beautiful little carpet is intended for a devotional purpose; and the

true believer would weave in the image of the sacred Kaaba with a memory of prayer to Allah: such embroideries and fabrics as were not devotional were meant for seats and hangings, constantly under criticism. Thus carpets were exclusively used in England up to the fourteenth century when they are first spoken of as luxuries '*sur quoy on marchoit.*'

The close, fine web without pile, of some Eastern carpets certainly seems still unsuitable to the rough service of modern drawing-rooms with their crowded parties and negligent or reckless housemaids. They are better fitted for wall-hangings and *portières* than for the pummelling of hard and ceaseless boots.

The indefatigable Morris advertises an improved hand-made carpet called 'Hammersmith,' for which he will supply designs adapted to the place where it is meant to lie. This is a step in the right direction; but really fine designs cannot be made 'to order.' They must await inspiration.

One well-known firm has a pretty carpet, repeating J. M. Whistler's well-known signature of a butterfly; if it could but be reproduced in worsted which would wear more than a month.

Brussels is no doubt the most durable kind of English carpet, 'Wilton Pile' the most springy and pleasant, and I am sorry that the vagaries of our high-art teachers are limiting us to Kidderminster. This is a good carpet for bedrooms and schoolrooms, but it is too thin to be as silent as luxury demands, or as warm as an English winter deserves. The flat, visible threads always have a somewhat ascetic and 'wrong-

side' look compared with a deep delicious velvet-pile. Why cannot we have such luxurious copies of Eastern work at its best as Henry IV. required when he instituted *La Savonnerie*? Such carpets might be made better (and probably cheaper) at home than in the East; and if customers could procure them at anything like a reasonable rate, they would soon chase from the field the unsatisfactory carpets we have for some time been obliged to put up with.

Curtains.

The character and grace of a room depend so much upon the hangings, that we cannot be too cautious in our choice of fabric. The kind of folds into which they fall, and the colour, must alike be carefully considered; and good sense will remember that the adage, 'Those laugh best who laugh last,' may be applied to furnishing materials—those look best which look well longest. In this age of shoddy and adulteration, it is difficult to know what one is buying, however high the price. No assurance on the part of the shopman is reliable, not because he means to cheat, but because he really does not know what the wearing capacity is of fabrics which look like silk, cotton, wool, but are in reality weighted with chemicals of a destructive kind. After much dismal experience, I am inclined to doubt every fabric containing the slightest stiffness, even when warranted at the best shops. Rich-looking, heavy satins, I know from experience, are largely doctored, and are useless for long or even reasonable wear, either in dress or fur-

niture. They can be tested by boiling a small piece before purchase: *if they curl up* in the process, they should be avoided; unadulterated silks boil without curling up. Fab[illegible]ade of wool and silk mixed may wear well, may c[illegible]ay stand sun and air, as modern 'silk' and 'satin' [illegible]; pure wool is most satisfactory of all. Beautiful a[illegible] the old honest furniture silks (however costly), stiff through close weaving, not gum, with their vast arabesque patterns and shimmering lights and shades; beautiful and durable as may be some modern copies of the old; the extravagance of using the specious rubbish which has taken their place recently does not justify me in recommending them, save to maniacs. When English tr[illegible] in silk and satin has regained its ancient prestig[illegible] time to uphold it, but not now. I propose the[illegible] certain fabrics which are worth buying, bec[illegible]ceable as well as beautiful; and I must [illegible]ention to woollens, cottons, and mixtu[illegible] beautiful such fabrics may be now adays, I hope, to show without frightening the fastidious public with a homely name. I began by condemning stiff fabrics, 'which [illegible] and alone' (the old phrase when silk weaving [illegible]); and this applies to woollen goods as well as [illegible] stiff woollen, or a stiff mixture, is probably aided by cotton, and the cotton is surely aided by chemicals. This adulteration, termed 'dress' in the trade, or 'harmless preparation on the back, without which the material would look very poor,' very soon becomes patent when the material is in use. The 'dress' will actually shake out in powder during the making. It will disappear in

patches, making the stuff look unequal in colour and thread; and the first time the curtains are cleaned or dyed, they can never be put up again. This may be 'good for trade' for a while, but not as the long run.

The ancient tapestries which [illegible] museums and many old houses in England were [illegible] of wool or wool and silk. The wool was fast coloured, and so strong and well woven that the threads have lasted until now. Every tint of fruit or flower, of sky or human visage, was reproduceable fairly well in wool. The brightest parts were put in by silk or paint itself. Such tapestries are eminently suited to wall hangings and every form of heavy curtaining. Nothing looks better as a *portiere* than a tapestry of moderately conventional design; nothing wears better. These tapestries can be copied now with very fair success. I have seen some which certainly *look* as if they would wear as well as the old—that is to say, they are [illegible] wool, as thick as carpet, the ends clearly visible at the back, and the colouring soft and harmonious such as *ought* to be fast. I have not, however, experimented with them. The warmth of such curtains, [illegible] weight is needed, would be delightful. For mere show part I would not even line them, to hide the [illegible] looking back, full of ends of wool, and the large folds in which they would hang would be suited to any dining-room or study where solid splendour seems in place. Imitation tapestry, such as canvas painted or stamped in oils, looks very well on the wall, but the oil colour is apt to stiffen the fabric, to make the folds ungainly, to crack off white, and to smell a little in summer. They do not really 'wash down' as they are said to.

The ordinary cloth or 'tapestry' curtain, usually sold for dining-rooms, is very fairly worth the money; it is wool, mixed with silk, often in really fine conventional patterns, but the silk is apt to fade away from the wool. I admire very much the pretty 'tinsel tapestries,' made in delicate colours—pink, blue, cream, &c., interwoven with tinsel; the effect is charming, colour and design are both nice, if the tinsel do not speedily blacken, as gold in wall papers does.

Among the mixtures, the new velvet tapestry, in which I saw a very beautiful design, is an instance of what can be done with wool and silk. A dark amy-grey silky ground, with large woollen flowers thereon, so well coloured and shaded, that, without any attempt at making the stuff a naturalistic anomaly, by being like real flowers attached impossibly to the perpendicular, the roses appear raised and velvety at a very great distance. It is costly enough and beautiful enough to grace any body, but apparently durable. The fine wool would tone down in wear all alike, and not need frequent cleaning.

A certain plush material, made of cotton, Messrs. Helbronner used to make in pretty designs, is now made by other firms reversible, in charming colours, soft to the touch, with a dado literally imitating the Indian rugs so fashionable for 'æsthetic' drawing-rooms. These curtains hang in soft, long folds, are pleasant to the touch, and in every way attractive. Whether they would speedily spoil, as most plush must, and whether they would bear any cleaning process, experience only can tell. 'Roman satin,' which is a mixture, and cheap, is a very nice material. The coarse threads have a pleasant

'character' which does not offer comparison with one's gown, and I think there ought to be a distinction between furniture fabrics and the human garb. It is made in many artistic soft shades, and wears rather well. All these thick, heavy curtains ought to be cut just to the ground and no longer. The silly fashion of sweeping curtains, like a lady's train, is unsuited to these weighty materials, which would catch the dust sadly on the floor, and no hooks or ropes would support them in nice festoons. Drawn back, not looped or caught up, they will all be satisfactory as fabrics. The colour, to be good, must depend upon the eye which selects it; the only safe [illegible] down is that none of the shades should be [illegible], not even the 'artistic' peacock shades, which often [illegible]. All very vivid shades in furniture [illegible]. Proper relief and a just measure of brightness [illegible] must be got, not by spots of sharp colour here and there, but happy (i.e. slight) contrasts. For instance, a room wholly draped in monotone, however nice [illegible], will always be dull and gloomy. A room [illegible] furnished with fine old tapestry must be so too, [illegible] as the colours are in tapestry. A hanging here [illegible] of deep red or yellow, or some other self-colour, will be [illegible] wanted for balance, just as in a very gay-coloured room the eye turns with delight to a mass of quiet tone. It is wonderful how bright a room may be made to look by skilful contrasts without a single really vivid colour.

Draperies about a room always add to the home-like feeling of it. They not only exclude draughts, but they conceal the sharp edges and angles of woodwork, which

uncovered always seems unhappy. I like curtains at every window, and over every door. I like pretty stuffs, furs, embroideries, and mats, flung loose over couches and pianos. They fall then at every corner and every wrinkle into nice natural folds, so much pleasanter than tightly fitting cases, further tightened by buttons.

Curtains ought to be fuller than they usually are; and such massive folds as I have been describing, for every kind of room, gain much from an alliance with thinner ones. Thin curtains, such as net, lace, &c., actually exclude sunlight, I suppose, but they *seem* to bring it in; a room with pretty lace curtains always looks sunnier than one without them. The modern fashion of cream instead of pure harsh white, is one which ought never to go out—yet how we used to puzzle over the ancient taste for so tinting lace, and marvel why they did not like it quite white! The cream-tint softens any contrast, and the shades of folds against the light are far more picturesque. The 'Madras muslin,' that simple fabric now in vogue, with its velvety touch and good straightforward patterns, is charming for any purpose, and, at least in a good quality, cleans quite as well as the horrible old 'lace' curtain, smothered with vague sprawling attempts at fancy vegetation.

Some intelligent person has devised a thorough novelty in the shape of *black* lace curtains with pattern in 'old-gold' colour. They are very pretty, and ought to be durable. They would not suit every room: but one in which black panels, or other dark masses occur, would be improved by such curtains in lieu of white. They are sold under the mysterious name of 'Cabul.'

How pretty black muslin might be stamped with gold or silver, like that worn long ago for veils, ruffles, &c. Properly stamped, it would be capable of being renovated by pressing out.

Bookcases.

Books may be considered an ornament by their association with learning and intellectual pleasure; but unless very handsomely bound, modern books are not particularly ornamental in themselves. They may, however, always inhabit a pretty bookshelf, and I have sketched a case which has the merit of novelty in that it breaks up the dull uniform brown tint which a mass of books usually presents by niches for pots and other ornaments, and cupboards whose panels ask for ornament.

The colour of a bookshelf is not necessarily dark; the wood may be inlaid, incrusted with pieces of metal or stone, or painted. In pale blue, white, or green, varnished and thoroughly dried before the books are put in, bookshelves may be made a real addition in beauty. The colour should depend on that of the walls and ceiling. A pale blue and white 'Morris' paper adjoins pleasantly pale blue shelves; the niches may be lined with Japanese gilt papers, and the doors painted with flowers, insects, shells, crests or more ambitious subjects. The pots may be Delft, Nankeen, Grès de Flandres, or yellow Crackle; with such a room the ceiling may be scarlet, and the doors black and blue and white.

With a room papered with a reddish paper, the

shelves may be white or sea-green. The niches may correspond with the wall, or they may have a purple tinge lighted up with silver points. The pots may be Cinquecento Italian ware, or Oriental. The ceiling

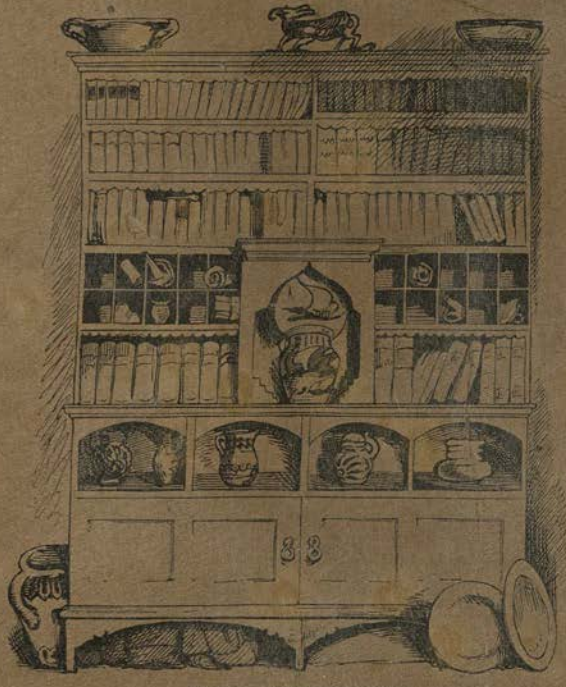

FIG. 62.—Design for a bookcase.

should carry out the colour of the pottery or of the niches.

Inlaid shelves—in a kind of soft-coloured marqueterie—go with almost any colour in furniture or

wall. A plain murrey-coloured wall with amber velvet hangings would have a very elegant effect.

I prefer the furniture of a study or library a little gay in colour, because a mass of books, even gilt-backed, unrelieved, always tells dark and heavy; still the walls should not be so obtrusively gay that the colour distracts attention from the books. I once knew a bookworm who, feeling the want of colour, painted his wall blood-red, his doors arsenic-green; and the ideas of butchery and poisoning which these two foul hues aroused in some minds sensitive to colour-influences, were really distressing.

A soft light-red and a kindly moss-green such as a wood grows in midsummer, would have had a different effect; but most colours are painful in too large a mass, and should be relieved by variations in the mouldings, or by pictures in parcel-gilt frames—filagree are best—and a little china, or *cloisonné*, or German glass, sturdy and quaint.

The books in one place and the china in another, each in its own glazed case, appears to me a joyless arrangement. Marry the gay colours of the one to the sober coats and bright thoughts of the other; mix pots and books in such a manner as that neither shall interfere with the other; and you get an artistically good effect. Moreover the depth of the niches is sufficient to prevent accidents, and a cloth hooked up during the sweeping out of the sanctum (which *must* be done, in spite of the prejudices of bookworms) preserves all together.

A pretty curtain, by the way, is a permanent pro-

tection from daily dust; and does not offer the same obstacles to reaching a book hastily as glass, or that worse device against theft, wire-netting. It should be in a thin material such as cretonne, or coloured Corah silk, and should slip to and fro on smooth and silent rings.

Plate and Cutlery.

Modern plate is a sore point with those who have learnt what plate can and ought to be, by collecting old plate.

It is extraordinary how ambitious and obtrusive, how elaborate and varied, are the vast pieces exhibited by the great silversmiths, and chiefly manufactured for purposes of presentation: how skilful and minute is sometimes the workmanship—and how weak, how coarse, how vulgar, how innocent of all anatomical and botanical knowledge, is the design!

When an English workman chooses to reproduce a piece of old or Oriental plate of fine design, how perfectly can he do it—he has appliances such as man never had before, and he is paid nobly. If designs were furnished to him by Leighton or Watts, for his candelabra, his plateaux or his clocks, he could carry them out with surpassing skill. But what do we see? ceaseless attempts of the unknown designer to run before he can walk: feverish efforts to be 'showy.' He will design a grove of palm-trees without taking the trouble to spend a day at Kew and observe the real form of a palm—he will surround it with cavalcades of camels and elephants

without a bone in their bodies, and frequently standing at an impossible angle: he will niggle over the ground with pebbles and footmarks not one of which is beyond criticism, set the whole abomination with looking-glass, and sell it to the Lord Mayor, firmly believing, in the words of his catalogue, that it is a 'superb masterpiece of magnificent design.'

And the mermaids! and the cupids! and the nymphs! with all their muscles wrongly placed: their throats mere cylinders of shapeless metal bent to fit the head—which is often grotesquely too small; their arms and legs smooth and tapering, without action or the possibility of action, *minus* muscles. The hands, supposed to be grasping something which they do not touch; the boneless fingers like elastic caterpillars, each one nearly S-shaped; the feet too small to support such length of frame; the ears put in the wrong place; the ankles bent in attitudes quite opposed to the power of the joint—the whole torso, which the modellers delight in exposing, as hideously out of drawing as frame can be, and the folds of crowded drapery 'done out of their heads.'

There are no doubt sins to be avoided in old sculpture. The ancients, though conscientious, were not impeccable. The Venus de Medici with fingers too taper to admit of an internal bone, may be our precedent for shapeless extremities: her tortoise-like cranium may excuse a similar modern blot. Still we know that her hands and head are not Greek. Many a mediæval Madonna is frameless beneath her massy folds, and great liberties have been taken with her muscles. Raphael himself

was partial to a leg bending inward at the knee, and outward at the ankle as (I believe) no leg, not even an acrobat's, can humanly bend. But we will not emulate the sins, only the virtues, of dead genius; and it would cost trade capitalists very little extra to get a good design from a Royal Academician and reproduce it frequently; Marochetti with all his faults was surely superior to the common English designer.

One of the merits of David, in the time of the Empire, was to check that inane style of modelling which during the decadence of taste under Louis XV. had begun to be tolerated, and to encourage something more robust and interesting. I have seen a scythed '*Time*' surmounting an old brazen clock, whose limbs showed the discriminating pressure of instructed finger and thumb upon the yielding clay, the torso well understood, the head well-set, the limbs nervous, decided, and full of life; yet the design was rough, there were no signs of mean and niggling finish, which like a specious edifice built on faulty foundations betrays the want of knowledge and integrity beneath.

The Phaetonic horses of the same period, though drawn servilely from classic types, were strong, muscular, equine—there was some modelling in them. The modern clock or centrepiece has a horse like a sausage, a rider that does not fit his back, or a nymph cast flat on one side and soldered on in relief, so that the first glance confuses the eye with parts round and parts flat.

The abominations found in pieces of the utmost costliness and labour have no excuse. Our museums, our schools of art, our Botanic and Zoological Gardens,

and books of incredible worth and cheapness, await a visit, a glance from our designers—but glance they will not, in the mental congestion of their dense ignorance and self-satisfaction; and the public ought to *insist* upon something better for their money.

What I said about the purchaser educating the workman to make good furniture holds doubly true in this higher department of design: for the material is more precious, and the cost is proportionately greater. I exhort the public to buy antiques and *not* modern plate—for the education of their own eye, so that they may see the difference between them, and may have definite ground to go upon in criticising modern work, and be independent of the salesman's salaried 'opinion.'

It is too melancholy for those who know something about old plate to sit all dinner-time opposite some horrible Presentation piece, only fit for the smelting-pot, whither may the burglar soon despatch it! watching the bad soldering, the coarse castings of rocks and goddesses, the industrious frosting which strives to divert the eye from ill-modelled and balanced figures, with limbs of unequal length, extremities of unequal size.

Where are the neat finish, the well-hammered surfaces, the careful graving, the delicate *repoussés* patterns which make old plate, however plain, full of interest? The plate of early Georgian times, simple as the patterns often were, ugly sometimes, compares with Victorian illimitably to the latter's disadvantage. The genuine old plate of Stuart times, far rarer, and far more beautiful, shouts our reproof still loudlier. Who can forget the lovely dish and ewer of Renascence work, and that

still older and finer Tudor cup, belonging to St. John's College, Cambridge? Who can forget that Briot, Luca Della Robbia, Benvenuto Cellini, Andrea del Verrocchio, Leonardo da Vinci, Pollajuolo, Ghirlandajo, and La Francia—with other names as great—were at one time

FIG. 63.—Candlestick, Italian, sixteenth century.

working goldsmiths: that Jan van Eyck and Holbein designed continually for plate, if they did not actually hammer it: and that even in England plate used to be deemed so essentially the artist's business, that court-painters were indiscriminately described as 'goldsmith,' 'carver,' 'portrait-painter,' and 'embosser' to royalty,

from the thirteenth century to the seventeenth? This we have repeated authority for. And when we study the ancient gold and silver ornaments of Greece and Rome, and read the long list of names of goldsmiths which have been preserved to us from this remote antiquity—when we hear of the microscopic groups worked by Callicrates of Lacedæmon and Myrmecides of Miletus, so small as to be hidden beneath a fly's wing, and scrutinise the foreign treasures which Cook's tickets have rendered so accessible—why, we ask again and again, are we to put up with these poor and vulgar table-'ornaments' (?) which we pay so exorbitantly for?

One very curious fact is, that many an artist, challenged to defend the plate on his own dinner-table, will hesitate, or stammer out the lamest excuses. 'Mustn't look a gift horse in the mouth,' one will say (a proverb which reflects on the honesty of benefactors!)—'I really never looked at the thing before,' another answers; or 'Well, it is rather a good design, I thought, without being *too* critical.'

Thus, artists will sometimes say English designs are good, as musicians will say English bells are good, because habit is so strong that they cannot rid their judgment of implied conditions. Their praise means 'good enough for bells,' 'good enough for plate.' It has never entered the musician's head to judge a bell as a musical instrument; it has never entered the artist's head to judge of his plate by the same standard as he judges pictures by. The thing has always occupied a lower place in his mind, and has not been thought of as belonging to art at all.

But if an artist, like any other cultivated man, has collected a few pieces of old plate, he knows the difference very well: his attention has been awakened to unforeseen possibilities, and he will no longer have a word to say in favour of the bits of presentation plate which have ceased to deface his table.

A bit of finely-modelled pewter gives a cultured eye more pleasure than a monstrosity in pure gold. I wish that those who can, would sometimes practise the art of working in the above humble metal which was not beneath the attention of François Briot, nor despised at the tables of Marie d'Anjou and Francis I. There are one or two amateur goldsmiths in England who have it in their power to redeem our name among the nations.

Meantime, the safest investments in modern work are the copies of Cellini's standard patterns (however impaired), and good Indian and Persian designs, which are very common, happily.

Until the public taste has risen to the critical level of our seventeenth-century ancestors, or the Athenian populace, the English designer will do no better than he does.

French designs are no loftier, though the workmanship is by some considered more refined. As to the humbler requisites of the table—the mere forks and spoons and knives, in which we hardly require elaborate workmanship since they must undergo rougher usage than salt-cellars, tankards, and centrepieces—they might be greatly improved without being more costly or more troublesome.

In the first place, the four prongs should dwindle

to three, which admit of a more elegant curve from the handle, and are quite as serviceable for all probable purposes. Spoons should be of two shapes, round and oval in the bowl, but never as large and heavy as most modern dessert and table-spoons, which are only fit for an ogre's jaw. The old Apostle spoons are better suited in shape to serve fruit or cream than oval spoons, but less so to drink soup than the present kind. A spoon should never be too large to be taken into the mouth; otherwise we might just as well sip from a bowl's edge, as our grandmothers sipped a 'dish of tea.'

The handles of most modern table plate, whether silver or electro-plated, are utterly destitute of refinement in design. The fiddle-patterned fork with its inconvenient edges quite forgets the outline of a fiddle, and is smothered under ornamentation such as the so-called 'shell' which really is a base imitation of the Greek honeysuckle, or other caricatures of Renascence detail under a fancy name; because this kind of clumsy prominent work suits trade purposes admirably. In silver it adds enormously to the weight, and consequently the cost. In electro it grows shabby speedily, because the spoon or fork always falls on the ornament, and forces us to replace the set before long.

The industrious collectors of Queen Anne plate (*really* Queen Anne this time), who do good service to art in giving us the opportunity to compare old silversmith work with new, nurse an enmity to engraved patterns which I do not wholly understand. Whilst *repoussé* work, well and delicately done, is certainly the most showy with its many reflected lights,

fine incised patterns seem to me admirable in many ways; and for such things as spoons and forks would be far more suitable and agreeable to the touch than embossed lumps. The admirers of Queen Anne plate admire chiefly its plain surfaces and solid worth of execution. No doubt in an age of debased design, the simplest design is usually the best; but simplicity is not art, for the highest art aims at decorating and beautifying, without marring the purpose; and satisfactory to the mind as is the small hammer-mark on the flat surface of an antique bowl or ewer because we prefer the thoroughness of patient handwork to the specious ingenuity of machines; yet the work which contains similar skill superadded to brilliant fancy, as in designs still more antique, must be far more satisfactory; and so a delicate *repoussé* or engraved punch bowl of, say, Stuart times, must rank higher than a plain one of Queen Anne's or the Georges' day, because more nearly influenced by a capital school of art. The value no doubt depends on the merit of the work; but the artist's share cannot rank so decidedly below the artisan's that the addition of ornament detracts from the true value of the object.

Conventional forms alone are suited to the humble purposes of sugar-basins, butter-dishes and castors. The butter can never taste sweet which is covered by a straw hat, or a kitten. The pepper shaken out of a top-boot though of silver, must spoil one's appetite. Salt should not be dug out of an animal's back, nor sugar picked up by a harlequin's legs. Now that our minor objects of daily use are no longer needed to point a moral or adorn a tale, as in mediæval times, and we do not care

for the stories of saints and the songs of troubadours appealing to us from under our hands; now that we have no longer the leisure and enthusiasm to evolve a new school of splendid design as the Renascence artists did, we had better adhere to careful reproductions of the works of those who could think and labour in the right way, else we shall surely fall back on the vulgarities of beasts and old wearing-apparel upon our tables.

In cutlery, people as usual do not know the difference between good and bad. It is strange, but true, that sterling hammered steel knife blades can hardly be got now, and only at an enormous price. We observe that our knives last for a very short period, as compared with our fathers', and we observe, too, that dinner knives are increasingly cheap. The blades, like fire-irons and grids, are merely cast, not hammered at all, and therefore they are brittle and soft, stand no wear, soon rust and chip, and fall out of the handles. The handles themselves turn yellow and crack before they have been in use a year or two, and the razor-fine blade worn down to the shape and size of an oyster-knife, in its strong and goodly setting, is a thing of the past.

As to shape, nothing can be clumsier than the fashionable one, which grows ever larger and heavier, it is true, but which can have had no utilitarian origin unless in days when the master of the house was so commonly in liquor at his meals that round-ended knives were thought safest for his eyes. This may explain, too, the wafer-like disc which ends some old-fashioned pointed blades. At any rate the pointed end, with blade and handle both sufficiently curved to give the hand a good

purchase, lasted throughout the seventeenth century into the eighteenth, as we see in the old silver-handled William III.'s knives and forks, blades and prongs being steel. Some old knives have blades so curved that they suggest some upright use of them in the fist, perhaps to pick up hot bits before forks were common. That this was comparatively late is shown by Coryat's account of being 'chaffed' by a friend for his Italian habits, 'who in his merry humour doubted not to call me at table

FIG. 64.—Ancient knives and forks.

furcifer, only for using a forke in feeding, but for no other cause.' Furcifer in Latin meant literally fork-carrier, but it also signified a villain, who deserved the gallows. Hence we get no table-forks for feeding before *temp.* James I.

Silver-handled knives and forks, however, are very cold to the touch, hardly pleasant in winter, though they admit of delicate ornaments which please the eye. Elephant's tooth, mother-of-pearl, coloured bone, shagreen, and above all, damascened steel, ought to supersede the monotonous bone or ivory in richly appointed houses.

There is no reason why high art, sensibly applied, should not invade the forgotten ranks of implements we

have to see and use so constantly as knives, forks, and spoons.

The subject of table glass is treated at some length in my 'Art of Beauty.'

Pianofortes.

There is nothing in the whole family of furniture so unmanageable as the modern pianoforte, and yet in every house where all-round culture is appreciated, a piano must be. The grand piano takes up as much room as a dozen people, and in the most cantankerous fashion, all elbows and angles, and wherever it stands it looks ponderous and unwieldy, like a big three-legged monster without a head. The small cottage presents a most unpicturesque front, and a still more unpleasing back, the high gloss and machine-cut face over silk are supported by a squat parallelogram of a body and the goutiest legs. The coarse designs which happened to accompany improved mechanism seem to have convinced many that nothing can be done for the pianoforte; but of course, if the same qualities of mind are brought to bear on pianoforte cases as have been devoted to other articles of furniture, a beautiful form is not beyond human power. Given the talent, enthusiasm, and fastidious skill which Palissy, and Boule, and Gibbons, and Martin lavished on their designs, joined to full understanding of the mechanical requirements, and why may not the pianoforte appeal as delightfully to the eye as to the ear?

It never seems to occur to people that this piece of furniture, as much as a curtain, or cabinet, or carpet, has

its own part in the good or bad *ensemble* of the drawing-room, its effect upon the inhabitants 'becoming' or the reverse, as much as any other prominent detail of background. People with otherwise good taste will force a large pianoforte of rosewood into a drawing-room which boasts no other scrap of rosewood to bear out the colour, and nothing else big enough to balance it. This kind

FIG. 65.—'Cottage' pianoforte, with decorated back.

of blunder cannot be excused by a love of music, any more than a mere partiality for clothes can excuse such garments as are ugly and useless. The question is, how to remedy it.

It does not require a very soaring genius to devise something better than flat dark surfaces, where the colour does not affect the resonance of the wood nor the

shape add materially to the tone, as in a violin. Slender columns supporting a slightly projecting cornice would in no wise injure the tonal value of a cottage Erard. Some tracery or arches of Gothic form might replace the patch of green cotton at back; these, when the pianoforte stood well out in the room, could be filled by handsome Oriental jars without contact with the instrument. Marqueterie would be harmless, too, for even a Straduarius violin, that miracle of resonance, has its dainty purfling, though it does not wear vulgar lumps of machine-carving on its edges. A parallelogram $4\frac{1}{2} \times 4 \times 1$ foot is surely capable of being treated architecturally in such a manner as to make it a beautiful and agreeable object, and if the cover were arched, or roof-shaped, there would no longer be a possibility of its being used as the general shelf.

The size of a grand piano cannot be interfered with, as this represents the length and disposition of the strings; but its shape could of course be improved and its colour varied to any extent. Instead of having to be concealed by silken hangings, as in æsthetic houses it is, why should not the vast expanse of top be inlaid with metals, or even treated pictorially, since the surface is, or ought to be, kept free from standing objects? so that in opening it during performance, a subject of real interest would offer a handsome apology for the erect mass of wood.

The Dutch used to paint pictures on their tables; why should we not paint pictures on grand piano-lids—a more seemly place than a table-top?

Inside the covers, various small cavities offer as many

opportunities for decoration as did the old 'spinets' of Tudor times, and here miniatures of appropriate scenes would not only interest the mind, but soften the general tone of colour, making it more becoming to the hand, and in better harmony with a well-decorated room and a picturesque *pianiste.*

In fact the vast expanse of one unbroken tint, and that gloomy, presented by a grand pianoforte is the reproach of modern art. It should be softened by plenteous and minute ornament, so as to have a pleasant bloom when seen from afar, as well as to reward the eye for close scrutiny.

A timid movement in the right direction has already been set on foot, and it is significant that pianoforte-makers have at last condescended to listen to suggestions and try experiments, for until lately the dreams of artistic designers were promptly crushed before they reached a fair circulation among the public. Mr. Alma Tadema and Mr. Burne Jones have lately cut the Gordian knot by simply decorating, without changing materially, the standard pianoforte pattern; and their two sumptuous instruments have been on view at Broadwood's long enough to convince the public that a pianoforte may be a picturesque object.

But some years ago a still more ambitious attempt was made, and alas! failed. 'Steward's Patent Euphonicon' was brought out 40 or 50 years ago, by a man of immense ability who, of course, paid by speedy ruin for being somewhat in advance of his age. A very small number of these instruments were issued at a moderate cost of about 120*l.* apiece. They were really beautiful in

form, firstrate in execution, every surface which required to be decorated (in a very chaste and simple manner) without interfering with the demands of musical construction, was so decorated, here with a small floriated pattern in gold, there with well-cut open-work, here again with some little monogram or device.

The instrument can be studied at the South Kensington Museum, to which we were able to commit a Euphonicon piano some years ago. It is very pretty; the utmost length of string is drawn upward on a harp-shaped iron frame, and the strings are exposed like a harp's, with a similar effect. The shorter strings are hidden in cases which present somewhat the appearance of reversed violoncellos; these are made of good light-coloured wood, contrasting pleasantly with the dark glossy rosewood of the fore-part. On these cases are painted slight patterns in gold, and a little gold is carried up the harp-like frame. The hammers and other mechanism which in a grand pianoforte are situated nearest the keyboard, are concealed in the lower part of the instrument, in fact the machinery of strings appears to be upside down, and the Euphonicon is therefore tuned from the bottom.

Personal experience of the Euphonicon must admit that the iron frame renders it heavier than an ordinary cottage pianoforte, whilst the exposure of the strings probably renders the tone, though sweet, less powerful than when they are stretched against a sound-board—at least for concerted music.

For drawing-room use, however, and for the voice, the Euphonicon seems to me as much more suitable

than a loud Erard, or Broadwood, as it is more graceful: it is in fact an effort of genius, a new and poetic creation, not founded at all on the usual pattern, but wholly distinct.

It is to be hoped that some enterprising firm will one day revive this artistic and neat design, which ought to drive out of the field the vulgarities of the clumsy form we have borne with so long, as we bore all the other eyesores fashionable between 1820 and 1860.

The old spinet was no eyesore: nor were harpsichord, virginal, clavichord, the gentle steps to modern mechanical perfection. Mary Queen of Scots had a virginal made of oak, inlaid with cedar and richly ornamented with gold. Birds, flowers, and leaves were painted on the cover and sides, of which the colours are still bright, and the lid is illuminated with a grand procession of warriors, whom a bevy of fair ladies are propitiating by presents of wine and fruit. How far back the pretty old name carries us, to picturesque times when devout nuns played upon their precious virginal soft minor hymns to Mary Mother, at evensong, unwitting of the almost ferociously loud effects required by future ears! Queen Elizabeth is described in the 'Memoirs' of Sir James Melvil, as playing 'excellently well' on the virginals, better than her sister of Scotland.

The harpsichord was pretty, too, its two keyboards gave it dignity, though Sebastian Bach liked it less than the clavichord, with its smaller scale but more flexible quality of tone. In 1760 a first-class harpsichord by Rücker cost one hundred guineas.

Evelyn speaks of 'a new invented instrument of

musiq, being a harpsichord with gut strings, sounding like a concert of viols with an organ, made vocal by a wheel, and a zone of parchment that rubb'd horizontally against the strings' (1663).

At the South Kensington Museum there are various instruments which might give us hints for clothing a machine to which we owe so much intellectual delight, and which is already worth a large sum, eyesore as it is. We are told that forty-eight different materials are used in constructing a piano, laying sixteen different countries under contribution, and employing forty-two different hands. In the Great Exhibition of 1851 there were some handsomely cased pianofortes: Erard's grand was valued at 1,000*l.*, Broadwood's at 1,200*l.*; but I have hardly seen any really picturesque case if we exclude Mr. Alma Tadema's and Mr. Burne Jones' pianos and the Euphonicon. Even Mr. Alfred Morrison's inlaid case designed by Owen Jones is rather staring than refined. Indeed, the whole outline requires modification. The pictorial decorations of the old instruments with keys of precious stones and agate, and exquisite inlaying wherein the seams are only visible by a magnifying glass, are the best ensamples for modern skill and daily improving taste.

The old square flat piano of the Empire time is less objectionable than the ordinary one, and I have seen a modern pianoforte of that flat shape, made in light wood, which by comparison is almost pleasing.

A totally novel design for an upright grand pianoforte, and one which has many advantages, is well worth quoting.

The design, which requires further working out, is founded on sound knowledge of the mechanical requirements, and for the first time raises the player upon a

FIG. 66.—Novel design for a pianoforte, side view.

platform, which renders him visible as he has never hitherto been in a crowded room, and gives purchase and breadth to the sound. Many pianofortes at chamber

FIG. 67.—Back view of the same.

concerts have a little platform built for them at considerable expense, but such an instrument as is shown in the diagram would do away with that necessity, the

seated player being naturally raised to a proper height for a standing audience, instead of being buried at a breathless level. This piano would also take less room than a grand piano upon a platform: it would occupy the area of a cottage piano. The keyboard is in fact built on a level with the uppermost part of the body; the length of string commonly carried into a bulky obstacle which conceals the player from half the hearers, whether he faces them or not, and must to some extent damage the sound, is here carried down into the platform beneath his feet. It should be strung diagonally. The square parallelogram is thus of the ordinary scope, but the platform itself is utilised as a sound-board; and this platform may be open or closed, decorated or plain, according to choice, and the portion occupied by the player detached if necessary from the portion required for the sound-board. The effect would be much better than the present unpopular cottage grand, without being as unwieldy as the flat grand. Of course the platform, light, but strengthened by beams, would be furnished with sunk castors.

The smaller stratagems for mending the ugliness of pianos are seldom very successful. Some persons who do not care to incur the expense of a new case, carry bookshelves all round the piano, which then seems set in a deep niche, which has an organ-like effect, the front of the case being replaced by painted or gilt canvas, or embroidery. This usually, however, prevents the lid from properly opening, and deadens the sound.

Others have the whole flat glossy case incised in good conventional patterns, and tinted (no costly process),

which simulates inlaid woods and carving. But these are all makeshifts.

The shape of a pianoforte ought at least to be as *mobile* as a sideboard, in which the patterns vary greatly, though all founded on the primal ideal of shelves, drawers, and cellarets.

If we could use the decorative properties of strings as in the Euphonicon, and mount the body, flat or upright, upon supports better than the two, or three, swelled legs, such as well-cut arches, or masterly statuettes, or even mere Doric columns or spirals in sufficient number to form a proper base for so heavy a mass of dark colour—we should already have gained an important victory over the last and most stubborn relic of tasteless vulgarity.

Doors.

Doors always look better carried up to the cornice, either arched or ending in a well-modelled lintel. Georgian houses have sometimes charming doors of solid mahogany, which compare favourably with our ordinary deal door of poor design, painted white or smeared with stain and varnish to look 'ecclesiastical.' A handsome headpiece can always be added to a mean door with improved effect, such as those bas-reliefs of classic aim we see in last-century houses, and which bear picking out with colour very well. Or a picture may be set there panel-wise, to annihilate the unmeaning space between the top of the door and the ceiling. The picture should be a life-size head (this is a good refuge

for a Kneller daub), not some minute landscape which tortures the eye with uncertainty every time it meets it; and a similar moulding to that of the door should form its frame. Down the sides of the door carvings of

FIG. 68.—Iron bolt, French, about 1550.

Gibbons's school may be carried, wreaths or scrolls, heavy or slight, painted or plain.

In a house with some pretensions to mediæval treatment the doors may be ornamented with elaborate hinges, or even bolts, a form of decoration so elegant that it is curious how seldom it is employed. These look best on a flat door, and may be underlaid with

crimson velvet, the metal being brass or iron, black or parcel-gilt.

The projecting hinges still seen on French doors are, I think, more picturesque than our own, wherein strength is sacrificed to neatness; but this is a false motive; it is more honourable to acknowledge the inevitable and make the best of it, even when it is a door-hinge.

Mediæval carpenters never denied the existence of their hinges, but they made the hinge an ornament, as also the illuminators did not avoid a flaw in the vellum-page, but they made the flaw an excuse for another flower or dragon.

Handles should be small and pretty, worked into the semblance of a conventional rose, or shell, or group—see what the Bernese can do with the subject of a bear, what the Scotch can do with the eagle's foot, and the Romans with the wolf!

A pretty design for door-handles is often seen in old Georgian houses, which is artistically good enough to reproduce, for even in cast metal it would be better than what we now use; in hard, worked metal it might become a gem, in chiselled bone or wood it would be less disagreeably cold to the touch. The union of handle and keyhole in a single frame prettily waved and carried to the edge of the wood, is very happy; the conventional bead and sunflower are well combined. It will be seen that the handle is very small, meet for the grasp of a lady's hand; not a clumsy lump which escapes a girl's fingers and quite defeats a child's.

I believe I was one of the first to show that the

panels of doors offer a good field for decoration, and it has become needless to observe that these must receive attention, for people now rather overtrim their doors. Panels of Japanese or English paper of fine design may content those who cannot obtain something better, and I have seen doors very well papered. Others may paint or get artists to paint such panels with flowers in the Japanese style, treating the panels as window-openings

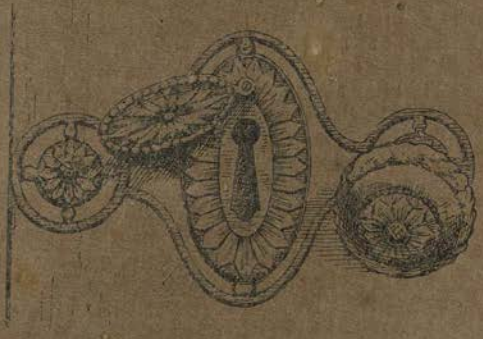

Fig. 69.—Georgian lock.

behind which the boughs appear, and allowing the jamb to cut through the design where necessary. Gold panels may be treated in a variety of ways; shields of arms are suitable to panels, and so no doubt are 'subjects' of higher pretension—portraits, views, and illustrations from favourite authors.

Many people complain that having made their doors beautiful and having therefore got fond of them, they have to quit them when their lease is up. This, however, is a delusion, as doors are easy to lift off their

hinges, and not costly to replace; and, if they were worth it, ought as fairly to follow their owner as his water-colour sketches and carpets. I have seen doors decorated by upholsterers to represent mother-of-pearl inlaying. Why not have the real mother-of-pearl instead of the effete resemblance?

Those whose houses belong to them might take far more trouble with so conspicuous a part of the building than they do. They might indulge in doors such as the late Mr. William Burges designed for his own house, in bronze, with charming bas-reliefs full of humour and grace, which remind one of Florence and Ghiberti. With easy hinges bronze is not too heavy a material for a door, and the effect is certainly extremely fine, the bronze wears into such splendid colouring.

The delicate bas-reliefs on the doors of Pisa Cathedral can never be forgotten by those who have studied them: it is difficult to know which to prefer, the lower part which by constant handling has become brown and gold, or the upper part which has grown green with the greenness of the summer sea, through never being touched at all—and the designs of home-doors may be of any kind, from small arabesques to the history of England. The bronze may be solid, or applied in thin *repoussés* plates; and when you have accepted the notion of metal ornament, the additional decorations, such as minute quantities of gold or the introduction of crystal, agate, and pebbles, crowd upon the aspiring mind with Aladdin-like splendour. Instead of which, people such as the Italians and Parisians paint deal to *look like* bronze!

Why people should hang works of art on walls *between* doors where often they can hardly be enjoyed for the chairs that intervene and the people that scuffle, yet never place them *upon* doors which must face you, and you only, as you open them, and are always within the line of sight, is one of those many problems for which our century is remarkable. In old days the reverse plan was adopted—but then the benighted folk did not consider that canvas and coloured pastes were the sole vehicle fit for first-class artistic talent, and that every other material was *infra dig.* I wonder whether Ghiberti, and Rucker, and Vischer, and Krafft, and, Gibbons, would be admitted to the Royal Academy if they sent up their works to-day, or whether they would be ejected as ironmongers and founders and carpenters because they had not used paint or marble? I am sure that very few private persons would employ them—those many brave Britons who go to the Royal Academy with a dealer, and ask him what pictures they shall buy.

As a rule, one side of every door should be protected by a curtain for the prevention of those icy draughts which every thoughtful builder constructs for the benefit of his brother the undertaker. Such a screen increases the comfort of every room, even when the fire is big enough to burn John Huss. It actually saves coal, by dispensing with such a bonfire, and the outlay in a pretty dhurrie or rug for this purpose is the more repaying if it diminishes in any degree the creation of yellow fog.

CHAPTER VII.

ON FIRE-PLACES AND FIRES.

Mantel-pieces.

STOVES are a problem still. How to obtain the maximum of heat with the minimum of waste; how to make the fire-place an ornament as well as a refuge, it is very difficult to say. The handsomest fire-place is no doubt the old-fashioned kind, large, roomy, important, as should be the Englishman's sacred hearth, which is, moreover, the most interesting part of the room for at least two-thirds of the year. Built proudly up to the cornice, or nearly, in finely carved stone or marble, like a shrine, probably enclosing a fine old portrait, the designs found in old Italian and German mansions, and in our own as well, are full of interest and character; those belonging to the Renascence are more or less florid and ornamental, but the carefully-modelled figures and draperies are often grouped with perfect taste. I have seen charming old Jacobean mantel-pieces where the dark oak has framed the fire with small but elaborate

carvings of hunting and other scenes, some of the smaller panels forming drawers convenient for cigars, brushes, string, &c., that are wanted always handy; some forming small shelves, on which a blue tobacco-jar or a bit of majolica looks delightful.

But the chimney itself is always of one construction, wide and open, and the fire has to be very large which will warm a big room or hall where there is that tremendous draught.

In the eighteenth century the passion for Chinese porcelain, *magots*, and the imitations in Delft pottery (a taste imported by William III.), extended the shelves from the walls to the mantel-pieces. At Hampton Court, &c., we see the woodwork adapted to hold these innumerable collections.

In the seventeenth century Old Stone and his father, master-mason to James I., probably worked at mantel-shelf designs. Evelyn says he went 'to Lambeth, to that rare magazine of marble, to take order for chimney-pieces, &c., for Mr. Godolphin's house. The owner of the workes had built for himselfe a pretty dwelling-house; this Dutchman had contracted with the Genoese for all their marble.' Grinling Gibbons carved foliage and busts on chimney-pieces of lime and other white woods; and he founded a school of excellent carvers, who continued, throughout the following century, working in soft woods, which demand great precision of hand, because admitting of no tentative cuts or after-polishing with sandpaper, and in which blunders cannot be amended. The Georgian carvers contemporary with Louis XV. have left many fine chimney-pieces in old houses.

In many old houses a flat panelling in linen-pattern or diaper above a simple shelf has a very good effect,

FIG. 70.—Inlaid pillar, in the church of Ara Cœli, at Rome.

and marks the separation of the fire-place and its whole backing from the remainder of the walls, which I think ought always to be suggested—something of the shrine look. Decorative pillars, which may well be appropriate in supporting the weight of a loaded shelf or chimney glass, might be designed from the Italian spiral columns in the church of Ara Cœli at Rome: fine and elaborate work would be quite in place.

A large mirror (*pace* all Empire-Annites) always looks well above the fire, if the shelf be low, as a window does; and is convenient there, because one can look at oneself and warm one's feet simultaneously; but unless the frame of the glass is truly a work of art it ought to be unnoticeable, and in the latter case it is far better treated as a panel and built into the wall, than laid against it. I incline to think the mirror-frame ought to be of similar material to the mantel-piece and apparently part of it. A bevelled mirror usually looks handsomer than a plain one.

Whilst searching for ideas for a very poor fire-place of my own I vainly overhauled the many manuals of good advice now daily pouring from the press—among them 'House Decoration' in the Art at Home series—a series, by the way, which, considering how good was the primal notion, has been ill-carried out by the writers, and is meagre in suggestions to a miracle. Not a hint for the real beautifying of stoves, nor of the house inside or out, was to be found, save the time worn command to destroy the mirrors and have 'Queen Anne' fenders; and the illustrations, which are peculiarly American in character, better suited the articles in 'Scribner's Illus-

trated Monthly,' where they first appeared, than the English series, which they probably fettered.

Why will not those who set up to be teachers teach the hungry public something? Why have we no industrious Le Pautre to give us designs which, bad or good, are at least novel for furniture so conspicuous and necessary as the fire-place? Panels of terra-cotta in relief, like Luca della Robbia's, set in dainty oaken mouldings, and divided by pilasters of carved ebony, might be suggested, nay, actually tried; jambs fitted with drawers set with plaques of marble or contrasting wood, or incised metal, might support a superstructure as rich as Giovanni da Nola's work, enclosing pictures, or something less common than blue tea-cups and plates; or tiles home-painted in designs more worthy than seventeenth-century nursery rhymes, illustrated by incorrect fourteenth-century figures, or mottoes better than the senseless 'Ye Pusse inne Bootes,' &c., and set in a framework of bronze—a metal honestly indigenous, and associated with Britain ever since the Phœnicians traded in the mineral ores from Cornwall and Devon a thousand years before Christ.

Ideas come freely as we call them, but money and energy are required to bring them to life. There are infinite possibilities beyond the foolish parallelogram of flat or machine-bevelled marble—and why *marble*?—a material too conspicuous to be admitted without being 'carried out' by other objects of similar marble. There are possibilities even beyond the solid, often handsome, Georgian wooden mantel-pieces, carved deep for shadow's sake, which gradually deteriorated as Gibbons's school died exhausted, and no other school of art suc-

ceeded it. It would be no thankless effort now if some of our Royal Academicians could bring themselves to design fire-places of metal, wood, slate, and terra-cotta which might become 'standard,' and bring grist to the mill as the public found good patterns within reach. Nothing so disfigures a room as a meagre, mean little fire-place—a mantel-piece of marble six inches broad, or black composition polished like the mirror of some infernal goddess.

But, being condemned to some such erection in a leasehold house, let none fear that a fine looking glass is out of place or cannot be well placed where people are most likely to use it. Ability *ought* to be able to make good use of so fine a potential ornament. Let the clock, too, inhabit the same conspicuous place—it is a nuisance not to know where to seek the time of day—but the clock must deserve its position. Some very fine old Louis XV. and Louis XVI. clocks, brass or gilt, may still be picked up at sales, representing figures of Time, or Phaeton with his horses, or Minerva helmed, all modelled in good, nervous style, very different from the boneless inanities which simper and lollop in clock-shops. A few fine pieces of bronze, china, or damascened work are suited on the mantel-shelf, which may be required for empty tea-cups, &c., and should therefore offer a cranny or two within easy reach, even if the main shelf is high. I wonder that green or streaky slate is not oftener used for mantel-pieces; it is not dear, and would look well in a highly-coloured room.

The ordinary white marble mantel-piece is, as I have said, a most disagreeable object. Not because it is of

white marble, but because the machine-carving is disgracefully coarse and inconsistent, and the material, which is very conspicuous, is not carried out by marble anywhere else. Inoffensive plainness is a shade better than offensive ornament: either can be concealed by a covering of embroidery, or velvet, stiff enough not to droop, and stretched flat so as to admit of brushing. Festooned velvet is always dirty, and not fit to be touched: lace, in my opinion, is unsuitable as aforesaid, because it looks like dress-leavings, muslin most absurd of all. The sides of an ugly mantel-piece may be hidden by old bullion embroideries secured on thin wood with very good effect.

I make these suggestions for those who, having their house on lease, do not choose to make the landlord a present of a new mantel-piece. For those who do, I suggest carrying the marble jambs up the wall to enclose the looking-glass.

Grates and Stoves.

The fault of most fires is that they do not warm the room, while they do drain the pocket. Modern science is seeking to provide a thin, vertical fire, about four or five inches from back to front, which presents in fact the smallest possible face to the chimney and the largest to the room, thus economising fuel and gaining heat. How to keep such a fire from going out, and how to make the surrounding machinery picturesque, is, I think, hardly yet a *fait accompli*. Most people are giving up the large circular burnished eyesores which drive a

conscientious housemaid wild, and yet at present this kind of stove, well filled, throws out the most warmth. It does so, however, only at a cost repugnant to intelligence—the waste of two-thirds of the heat of the fuel. This waste is not innocuous either, it clogs the chimney with soot, it smothers the furniture with blacks, it burns down the house, and it sows death broadcast in the heavy brown fogs which exist upon the fatal union of damp with coal-smoke. It ought to be a stringent law that every household, like every factory in town, should consume its own smoke; but until we can get that law passed it is a duty owed to something else than our pocket, to diminish what goes up the chimney or utilise it for its proper purpose, warmth within-doors.

The new anthracite coal promises to help us, but is hardly yet sufficiently manageable or sufficiently cheap to be recommended.

The greater the draught through the fire, the less heat naturally passes into the room. Some stoves will roar themselves hoarse, and yet their much cry betokens little wool—they throw out no heat, and devour ceaseless scuttles of coal; others smoulder sulkily all day, though pampered with fuel, and will not even roar.

A certain basket-shaped stove that used to be in vogue in fashionable houses certainly throws out a good deal of heat; it is shallow, and the surface presented to the room is broad, being mainly the summit of the fire; the draught is so managed as to carry the smoke up the chimney, although this is set considerably backward. The Norwich stove, which so many people have fled to as a sure refuge, is moderately successful—not more.

It throws out heat fairly well when filled high, and it certainly economises fuel, because the bottom of the grate is solid. The 'Country Parson's Grate' is better, because it is wider and less deep, and made otherwise on the same principle: thus the ideal of the thin vertical fire is more nearly realised.

Norwich stoves have a certain prim quaintness of build, which accords prettily with some artistic rooms; but the fashions of bleak, level, precise Norwich, like all the fashions of the Empire time, are less to be recommended for beauty or pleasantness than for their temporary novelty, and the blessed release they offer from curves in convulsions. The flat sides of this class of stove, whether 'Parson's' or 'Norwich,' may be covered with tiles of any design or colour, modern or antique (Dutch blue seem to go very well with any kind of decoration), and if the stove itself is brazen, not black, the colouring is decidedly bright and pretty. But the brass, like all things modern, is not meant to last long, and the trouble of keeping it clean is ill-repaid by its surface giving way in a disagreeably short time. Black is, therefore, to be preferred, and costs less every way.

Were it not that the beauty of a burning fire is too valuable to get rid of, even from the æsthetic point of view, I would recommend gas stoves and hot pipes as far more comfortable, after the American fashion. A big fire is either so hot that you cannot sit beside it—and to sit anywhere else seems inconsistent when there *is* a fire—or else it has a way of toasting bits of you and leaving the other bits in the power of 'Jack Frost.' It is horrible to have a cold nose and a burning

hand; it is more horrible to have a burning nose and cold hands. Fried toes alone are small comfort, so is one hot ear, yet it is really not possible to be equally warm all round beside a fire.

The ideal condition of things would probably be a small fire whereby one can sit sociably, whilst the rest of the room is moderately warmed by pipes. Moderately, I say advisedly, since most people who use pipes accustom themselves to a temperature which is very apt to cause congestion of the lungs on entering it after a cold walk. In my opinion, a sitting-room over 55° Fahrenheit is unhealthy, and extremely likely to induce colds.

Builders have very little regard to either comfort or health in their machinations (by-the-bye, how often the builder and plumber 'undertake funerals!'). In two things they are incorrigible—scamping the drains and making the door opposite the fire.

The economic similarity of London houses often makes this latter plan necessary, and in such cases screens and *portières* ought to be largely used. People often wonder how it is that they catch cold while sitting by the fire, and they seldom consider that the door is either at right angles or opposite to the stove, so that a draught, always created by a fire, exactly catches them. Children, too, often escape colds for weeks in a nursery when a fire has not yet been admitted; directly fires are begun, colds are rampant; this is caused by the draught which is created by the fire. Here pipes again offer a solution of the mystery how to be warm.

Gas might be more used than it is for kitchens, as

well as rooms where fires are only occasionally wanted; and probably when the electric light comes into popular use, such stoves will be the sole refuge of the gas companies.

I consider most of the asbestos fires a delusion and a snare, but it is not the fault of gas or asbestos, but of the purveyors who advertise them at a certain price but treble it in fitting, which renders such fires far more expensive than most ordinary ones; at least such is my experience.

They do not throw out heat correspondingly with their ill odour and propensity to get out of order, and undoubtedly they burn unlimited quantities of gas.

Properly fitted and managed, however, gas ought to be far more economic than coal, as the stove can take up less room and the entire heat *may* be more easily utilised. Soyer says he roasted a whole ox for the Royal Agricultural Society's banquet in 1850 at a cost of less than 5*s*. for gas, within a space of 6 ft. 6 in. in length by 3 ft. 3 in. wide, a few bricks and a few sheets of iron, with 216 small jets of gas coming through ½-inch pipes, representing the whole apparatus.

Close gas stoves are much used in France, where people are thrifty, and close stoves of every kind are of course more economical than our open fire-places. Kitchen stoves on the principle of the Leamington ranges are recommended in all books upon cheap and good cookery, as very little fuel is needed; the fuel may be of the cheapest kind, there is no fear of spoiling the provisions by falling soot, or smoke getting under the lids, and the cooking utensils required are not many.

The best stoves for warming rooms are George's Calorigen, which are made with a double pipe, for the purpose of (1) carrying the foul air up the chimney or elsewhere, and (2) admitting fresh air, which it *warms during admission*, the true secret of good ventilation.

Stove Ornaments.

Draperies about that pent-up tiger, the fire, as I have already said, to me seem always a fault in taste. However heavy, however unlikely to catch fire, they always look as though they meant to, and with any draught they are apt to balloon in an annoying fashion. Norwich grates might surely be constructed with a drawer-plate (which hardly ever slides down easily) elongated so as, if required, to reach the hearth: this flat surface, like a blind, would offer capital opportunities for wrought-iron decoration in bas-relief or simple incision; this protected by sufficient depth of ridge at each side to admit of constant pulling up and down. Nothing could be a better shield for this kind of stove; for the use of the idle grate would not be denied, though decorated, and the tiles would remain visible.

When will somebody invent a fine bas-relief design in lieu of the mock Japanese ornament which we are so tired of in these grates? and when will it occur to some one that bars might as well be twisted, knotted, or network fashion, as the inevitable straight or bowed bit of iron of clumsy thickness which forms the conspicuous portion of every grate? People wander over France and Germany seeking for those simple old iron fire-

backs which are certainly a point of interest when the fire is not piled; but who ever heard of *good* hammered iron ornaments being placed at the front of grate or hobs —at least, since the old artists of Cellini's school perished, who would have shown us Vulcan at his forge as grandly modelled on the blower as any infant Bacchus on a cup or hanap, and beaten the torch of Eros into hob or andirons with twenty times the spirit and good sense put into the vulgar cast-iron flowers (!) or ormolu shells and birds (a cricket would be a better subject!) which we hook into our burnished steel without a question or a qualm.

What Quentin Matsys, Benvenuto Cellini, Thomas Rucker of Augsburg, Peter Vischer, would have done with such an opportunity as a modern grate and fire-irons —yea, and not rested till he *had* done it—I sigh to think. The Cluny Museum possesses magnificent fire-dogs of various periods, and there are talented, conscientious blacksmiths now a days whom a little instruction and encouragement would develop into veritable pillars of English art. I saw some iron foliage treated much in the Matsys spirit at Powell's once, which gave me hope and comfort; however, I heard that the nineteenth-century atmosphere had so far injured the workman that he could only be got to work at a price which frightened away most customers; and the world is the loser by the scarcity of good workmen to provide what so many cultivated people are willing to pay a fair if not a fancy price for. The next best wrought-iron I have seen in England is in Ely Cathedral, provided by Skidmore, of Coventry—very pretty work.

Wrought-iron.

Before quitting the subject of iron as applied to stoves, I may add a few words upon its merits in other kinds of decoration. In the last century considerable interest revived in iron as well as bronze for railings, balustrades &c., through Caffieri's and Gallien's talent; in England we find first-rate designs under the Georges, among them the common patterns of halberds erect around the house is not unworthy of mention. But the art of working and casting in iron is of remote antiquity. Sculpture in cast-iron is attributed to Theodore of Samos, 850 B.C. The chronicle of Pharos places the invention of wrought-iron in the year 215 before the Trojan war; but it was not till after that war that the Greeks abandoned weapons of tempered brass for weapons of iron, which must have awakened the genius of many artists since the name of Hippasis, a celebrated chaser in iron, has come down to us. In the middle ages no hing can exceed the elaboration of arms, of locks and keys, of hinges, false and real. In the twelfth century skill was almost in perfection. In the fourteenth century they mounted the iron lace-work on red cloth for latches, the plates of locks, and to embellish the chests.

The art is so thoroughly English, that the commonness of our name Smith has been attributed to the preponderance of workers in metal; as has the average of health and muscular prowess among families bearing that name, to the fact that a good smith must be a

strong man. Germany has been long renowned for her wrought-iron ornaments, and there is exquisite French work in this metal, from the fifteenth century to the

FIG. 71.—Iron bolt, sixteenth century.

sixteenth, as delicate as natural vegetation and refined by advanced art knowledge. Some of the old keys are perfect jewels of iron, containing historic and religious

scenes of marvellous minuteness in labyrinths of foliage and tracery; the bolts and locks are often most beautiful; mirror-frames again are as elegant as silver, in *repoussé* and wrought-iron; and how many a lamp in a modern drawing-room might humbly emulate the superb lanterns of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries!

FIG. 72.—Mirror with wrought-iron frame.

Work of this kind, though no doubt at a lower standard than the old, can for the most part only be obtained of German blacksmiths and cutlers. Time seems too valuable in England to encourage any hope of elaborate and loving labour; whilst *brain*, curiously

enough, seems to be at a discount, and to fetch nothing at all. Scamped work, even for high pay, is all we can get. What else we want we must seek abroad where the workmen are not yet spoilt, or better educated in the right sense. It would be a useful work to employ some Nuremberg or Swiss working smith to provide us with lamp and flower-stands, fire-guards and screens, window-blinds and balconies, fenders and stove-sides and fire-dogs, besides gas-brackets, chandeliers, frames—nay, clock-cases and candlesticks innumerable, from old designs, how much more appropriate and well finished than the cast, and moulded, and tricky objects in false gold, and false silver, and even *false brass*, oh my country! made to break, which now choke the shops called of cutlers, who will not even make dinner-knives in decent hammered metal in these years of grace.

CHAPTER VIII.

LIGHTING AND VENTILATION.

Becoming Lights.

UNTIL the electric light is more manageable than it now is, there are but two ways of lighting rooms—gas or lamps and candles. Gas is the cheapest and the least trouble, but it is the most destructive to furniture and pictures, the least healthy, and the least becoming. Lamps are the next best, if they can be induced not to smell; wax candles are the best of all, if they can be warranted not to bow.

'What is that candle looking down at me for?' said a suspicious child, watching one that was burning busily upside down, and shedding as much grease as it could. And it would be well if chandlers made candles a little harder, so that a warm evening would not so affect their spines.

The main light ought to be concentrated as much as possible in one spot. This is nearest to a natural effect, for the sun is never in two or three places at once, and will be found becoming to faces and the folds of dresses

(when dresses have any). But lights will be required in corners where obscurity is apt to become depressing and to check conversation. People are like birds, they are silent in a dark room and think of ghosts, but they begin to twitter as soon as they can see each other. On

FIG. 73.—The golden candlestick from the Arch of Titus.

the whole, one big chandelier containing a great number of candles, and a few candelabra, of some fine form similar to that of the lost Jewish treasure carved roughly from memory on the Arch of Titus, or candles standing singly in pretty candlesticks, light a room best. Lamps may be similarly arranged. But it should always be

remembered that faces look best (if we may venture to disagree with Queen Elizabeth) with their natural shadows, which give that 'drawing' to them always missed on the stage when the footlights glare up from below—an unbecoming light, but one which is valuable to actresses whose faces would be left wholly in shade by lights placed high, and thus invisible to the loftier spectators.

A sensible woman will always have her sitting-room light, for many reasons of health, convenience, and work—but not too light. A woman who is 'getting on' will not sit with her back to the light, that negress-effect is not pretty, but she will sit at a respectful distance from the light. She will have the window by day, the lamps by night, so arranged as to throw broad, but not heavy and not insignificant shadows. The light must not come from *too* high a point; else every slight inequality of surface becomes accentuated, every cheek past its first youth recalls a skull, every eye that does not require them gains sunken hollows, and the flat eyes that do need a shade beneath them are too few to make such a cost worth while. Light, as in nature, should come from above, but as in nature only when it is well diffused, not concentrated as in artificial lighting.

Without some attention to these things, your room gets the reputation of being an unbecoming room; just as some hostesses get the reputation of never having pretty guests. Nobody wants to look ten or twenty years older than he is: (at least until after eighty, when it becomes a point of pride to emulate Methuselah): and the massive *chiaroscuro* which is admired in an old

head by Velasquez is properly unpopular in a drawing-room devoted to social pleasure. It can nowhere be better studied than at the Royal Institution; at which shrine of learning mundane and frivolous considerations are very fitly set aside, and the youngest and prettiest faces loom through a veil of stern, uncompromising philosophy, and assume *pro tem.* at least a decade of added years and gravity. This is caused by the colour and the lighting.

The main light then should come from above so as to ensure some shadows somewhere, but minor lights should diffuse a comfortable and becoming clearness, sufficient to cheer, but not impertinently criticise.

Lamp-forms.

May I remind readers that a candlestick, lamp, or any other support, ought to be a pretty and consistent object? That Cleopatra's Needle alight at one end, and streaked with pink and blue, is scarcely a work of art? That pheasants and monkeys adhering to portions of the rooms, and upholding lamps, are by many degrees removed from a correct feeling for either art or nature; and that even such miserable shreds of humanity as babes without bones, and Don Quixotes with nothing else, are equally tasteless supports for moderators. If the representation of humanity is desired for this purpose, it ought to be in a strong material and in an attitude suggesting physical force.

Large negro-lads with glass eyes and arsenic-green draperies starred with gold, are not as suitable, even in

a great hall, as a bronze Hercules or a really well-modelled elephant. I have seen copies in marble and terra-cotta, of classic statues adapted to gas-jets and lamps which they support in their hands, and the effect is sometimes neither unnatural nor ugly, for a human being *can* hold a lamp. Terra-cotta is a material so facile and inexpensive that it might be oftener used to reproduce really fine designs of artists of calibre, where the sound knowledge of the frame, and the firm nervous handling leave nothing to be desired. But anything suggesting animal forms which is short of *first-rate* will be avoided by people who either have taste or who wish to seem to have it. And as almost all modern designs in plate, biscuit, plaster gilt, bronze, &c. sold in big shops are modelled by so-called 'artists' with the best intentions and soaring fancy, but no adequate knowledge of anatomy, I think those who cannot employ a Royal Academician for such ornaments had better either adhere to standard reproductions of antiques, or—avoid animal forms altogether.

Concealed Lights.

Concealed lights are not so much in use as they might be. The effect of 'a moon unseen albeit at full' may often be obtained for some faint-coloured picture, hardly visible when a glaring lamp is held between it and the eye, by a concealed lamp with the right kind of shade. Luminous points, silvery, murky, rosy, are often wanted for certain effects, little surprises behind screens or in side-niches which seem fairly magical when the

source is hidden, and changes of white light for tinted light are often very beautiful.

However, when the electric light comes into common use, the problem how to light adequately a large room without heating it will be solved. I have seen the picture gallery at the Fitzwilliam Museum, at Cambridge, successfully lighted by electricity subdued by a tinted globe; Lord Salisbury has introduced it at Hatfield; but a revolution in dress-colours and wall-colours will doubtless follow its introduction in private houses, for some of our now fashionable colours, specially intended for use by the yellow light of gas, are greatly altered under the electric rays; and the complexion itself suffers at present. Blues and peacock-greens become painfully vivid; while yellow, which nearly disappears under gas, keeps its natural colour.

Pumps and Pipes.

Ventilation can only be considered in connection with art and beauty because there can be no enjoyment of either without health, and health is now seen to be largely dependent on our sanitary conditions. A pretty room stabbed through with knife-like draughts, or stuffy and pervaded by drain-odours, no more agrees with the lovers of the fit and beautiful than an airy comfortable one coloured with Judson's dyes. But the difficulties of ventilating rooms which are fashionably crowded are nearly insuperable, because a certain number of cubic feet of fresh air ought only to be breathed by a certain number of lungs, whereas, when too many people inhabit

the space, the air ought to be mechanically changed with adequate speed, and this can surely only be done by a pump.

Tobin's method, which brings the outside air into rooms through pipes which are carried some feet up the sides of walls, is perhaps the cheapest and most efficacious. It can be applied by any intelligent builder, and the pipes, whether angular or round, can be decorated in such a way as to rather improve than detract from the look of the room. Beauty in a room does not consist in unbroken planes of colour from corner to corner; and any jutting object ought to be hailed as an opportunity, as the old illuminators hailed a flaw in the vellum. A pipe therefore can be covered with arabesques in paint or moulded stucco, and made part of the fabric of the wall with a little ingenuity. It could be treated architecturally as the stalk of a large conventionalised flower. See what the ancient Egyptians did with the lotus, what innumerable subjects they drew from that one plant: and how easily they could have made a Tobin pipe into a column or portion of a column, fluted up into flower forms. A hollow flower could easily disguise the ugly and lumpish point of ingress for the air, which could be as well regulated behind fluted petals as behind any other angles. Or such pipes at regular intervals could be enlarged into slight columns supporting a lightly relieved arcade, forming well-shaped panels for decoration. Again, the conventional halbert which relieves every corner in old Dutch architecture at once suggests itself as a capital cloak for Tobin pipes. A very little thought will model

such a halbert as would appear bound to the wall, its fringed spike boldly relieved, in brass or iron, gilt or no. People's fancy as to the proper height for the ingress of the air varies. I have seen pipes only three or four feet high, in a casing broad enough to support a vase which pierced at bottom would seem to be standing on a square bracket, while in reality it admitted the air. I have seen others running up to within a short space of the cornice, for which the halbert idea is adapted.

The low pipes certainly sometimes create disagreeable draughts; but probably if they were placed so that the draughts were carried up instead of across the rooms inconveniently near our shoulders, such annoyance would not be felt.

The system adopted at the House of Commons, whereby the admitted air is warmed by passing over hot rollers, and moistened by spray, is most perfect of all, but it is costly—not more so than many people could afford, if they chose to spend their vast incomes so wisely—but too costly for the majority of the ventilating public. Gas is so apt to heat as well as desiccate the air that some spray-apparatus for moistening the air at evening parties would indeed be a boon. Meantime, numerous revolving fountains (of water, not scent) or large blocks of ice decorated with roses and creeping ivy, are the nearest approach to it; and while cooling and moistening the air they form a very lovely ornament. The latter plan has become common since I first suggested it twelve years ago in 'St. Paul's Magazine,' the more so as ice can be manufactured so easily and inexpensively.

Anti-Smuts.

Many persons object to windows being much open during the summer on account of the invasions of blacks. Many years ago I tried nailing up a guard of thin strong muslin, coloured green or red, which is certainly rather useful in defeating the largest soot-flakes, and does not exclude the air or light. It should be often changed otherwise the soot with which it becomes charged detaches itself by its own weight from the muslin and enters the room. Those London sufferers who use white curtains will find the few pence required for the muslin well spent on this harmless kind of—no pun, please—black guard.

It is said that the register in stoves should never be closed for the sake of ventilation; but I think that openings higher in the room where the air enters without passing over a field of soot are far better, and the air must be better and cleaner. The chance of a soot-fall with its penetrating odour, to say nothing of a sore down-draught of one's neighbours' smoke at any moment, renders an open register a very disagreeable means of ventilating a delicately-furnished room.

Hollow walls lend themselves better to purposes of ventilation than solid ones, and keep the room warmer in winter and cooler in summer, as the enclosed layer of air is comparatively a non-conductor of heat. They might be oftener used with advantage; especially for detached houses and those on a damp soil, as they effectually keep out damp; and they are said to keep

out sound better than solid walls—which would be a blessing when the next-door neighbours like to play the piano, and think they can.

Punkahs in some mechanical form might also be used in this country for ventilation, particularly for crowded drawing-rooms, schoolrooms, and churches.

Drain Ventilation.

The drain-question is too serious to be resigned to the doubtful integrity of builders or the bungling workmanship of ignorant plumbers. It should be studied, and mastered, by every householder on whom the health and lives of others depend, for the ventilation of the drains is of more consequence than that of any room, because they are often hermetically sealed up, and *then* the smallest escape of the evil gases, generated by this sealing, means death.

Ventilating pipes to the topmost point of the roof are of the first importance to a healthy house, until the circular road of progress brings us back, as it threatens to do, to the old-fashioned system of open drains along the street. Alas! the negligence of one's neighbour may be as fatal to one's own child as negligence at home; and it will be a red-letter day when the measures discussed by the Public Health Conference in June 1880 for competent sanitary inspection and insurance (*sic*) of all dwellings, receive the sanction of the Legislature. Mr. C. N. Cresswell proposes to classify all dwellings and grant certificates of sanitary efficiency in much the same way as Lloyd's Association grants

certificates of the sea-worthiness of vessels for the mercantile marine. Why something of the kind has not been arranged long ago is the natural question. Private persons have indeed in rare cases insisted upon a sanitary certificate with their houses, renewable from time to time; but such precautions among a few are of little real value, since one's neighbour's sins are as dangerous as one's own.

The organisation of County Boards for the furtherance of this object and the formation of public opinion strong enough to check the interested opposition on the part of owners of property is but a matter of time. Every one of us may add his mite of pressure in a movement so vital to the interests of those we love.

I am glad to hear that a number of distinguished scientific men have already been elected on the Honorary Council of the proposed Sanitary Assurance Society, recently provisionally approved by the Board of Trade; among them Professors Tyndall and Frankland.

CHAPTER IX.

ON THE BEAUTY OF FREEDOM.

Ars longa, vita brevis.

AS I near the end of my book, I am prepared for the inevitable cry: 'We have not been told what to do. There is not a word about the drawing-room—nor the bed-room—nor the kitchen—not a hint what colour is proper for this room, or what material for that!'

Would not such dogmatism be in total contradiction to my first principles, most indolent lambs? It is the upholsterer's, the penny-a-liner's, the tyro's business to frame laws as of the Medes and Persians about that which is independent of small shackles—it is mine to emancipate you from their ignorant tyranny. There is no *ought* in beauty, save your own feeling of delight, and it is only the pleasure of the majority which determines art rules; and the more capable you are of comparing one sensation with another, in fact, the more you cultivate your eyes and minds, and the more fastidious you become in arranging pleasant accessories, the higher

is the form of beauty resultant from your efforts. A very little, any bright scrap, pleases the uneducated man, and to him it is beauty. As his brain develops by study of its impressions and its favourite associations, he is less easily satisfied; demands change, relief from the intensity of this or that sensation of pleasure or pain. But comfort, pleasantness, propriety, on which beauty depends, can only be determined by the nerves themselves, and as the faculties of individuals differ, like their figures, the blatant customs of consecrating this wood to the dining-room, that to the boudoir—this fabric to the chair, that to the curtain—deprive our homes of all character, and English art of all vigour.

When beauty is tied down in a trap, she has the faculty of evading it; like the lark in the Chinese palace, wherein she could not sing as in the wild free woods.

Art is long, though life and its laws are brief. I have tried to show how the broad principles enunciated in my first chapters have been borne out by all the schools of art furniture.

In the fourteenth-century room, the mass of monotone necessary to relieve the bright frescoes, tapestries, and costumes was provided—perhaps by dirt—certainly by the broad shadows inseparable from low-pitched rooms with thick walls and small windows. In a Louis XIV. room, the necessary monotone was sought by the artificially chequered glow of Boule furniture, lighted up at certain points artistically by metal mounts; the Stuart room had its dark oak wainscot and furniture, the Georgian had its mottled wood-marquetry, and damask

walls; the Louis Seize room provided plenteous grey by means of its blended opal tints. Against a monotone all bright objects look doubly effective; but the monotone must not be monotonous, it must be *broken up* discreetly; not by small contrasting objects which have a spotty effect, but by carefully regulated tones of similar tint. A shady room requires no mass of monotone from the decorator, it has it by nature.

No artist allows a large unbroken mass of one colour in his picture, but he as carefully avoids patchiness and spots. It is far more difficult to blend bright colours beautifully than dull ones; but the bright colours are best, after all; the sunny fields are fairer than the gloomy ones, though of both we may say, 'behold, it is very good.'

If there were a fixed law that only one kind of art had a sound basis—what would have become of all the schools, all fresh effort, and honest ambition? we should have had no choice offered us from this land or that. We are free: let us use our freedom with discretion and kindliness.

Chords in Colour.

I have written so much in my previous book, the 'Art of Beauty,' upon the qualities of colours, and their effect on human faces, that I may well refer my readers to it for hints; for the colours which are fit for dress are fit for furniture, which is a kind of detached dress, influencing appearance in somewhat the same way. Certain combinations occur to every thoughtful student of natural effects, in flowers, insects, minerals, &c., which

are eminently suitable for our walls and our garments. A few strike the mind at once, whether orthodox or not:—

1. Cream white and Turkey red.

2. Crimson velvet, pale blue, and salmon-colour—of course I am asked, what *is* salmon-colour? Look at a piece of salmon.

3. Brown and crimson, making bronze or flame-colour; palest blue.

4. Cream and violet (the colour of a violet, not aniline). The two should be carried into each other, by slender arabesque designs of each colour upon the other; or by the dull murrey-colour formed by their mixture.

5. Blue and green; care is required what blue and what green.

6. Salmon-colour and chocolate, with sage-green.

7. Maroon and pallid sea-green.

8. Blue and pink with brown, sea-weed-like.

9. Turkey red and slate-colour shot.

10. Silver grey, mixed salmon and primrose—a combination I have repeatedly tried with pleasant results.

11. Amber, orange, crimson, sage-green.

12. Pure white and carnation—very violent, requires craft to combine well.

13. Primrose and dark green.

14. Cowslip colours—observe one.

15. Pale yellow and chocolate—see common butterfly.

16. Dull lilac, rose-colour, and Tussore colour.

I could go on for ever, for the combinations are endless, and a room coloured after this or that natural

object would be many degrees more beautiful and 'original'—much abused word!—than the commonplace mockeries of mud and mildew.

Everybody who knows a little about painting is aware that warm and cold colours should alternate, generally speaking; that all good colour is gradated. People are sure now, as they were not when I first said so in print, that dark walls increase the apparent size of rooms, while light walls contract it; that a white or overbright ceiling seems close to your head, and a well coloured dark one retreats upward, because we all know that as we see things better the nearer they are, so the less we see them the farther off they seem. But the garden and its inhabitants, the changing sky, the creeping sunbeam, or even the half-empty decanter on the luncheon table, will be better teachers as to where light should soften into dark, or dark gradually explain itself in colour or form, than a score of chapters written at the instigation of a dozen firms.

Becoming Colours.

Now, if any woman rather shrewder than her fellows, or any man having a pretty wife, ask me, 'How shall I know which combination best suits my especial needs?' I answer, *Try it in a bonnet.* No colours suit a room that are not pleasing in dress. Place a mass of the proposed tints around a healthy countenance, now this, now that, for comparison's sake. Throw over it, when chosen, a thin film of black Brussels net, which will tone down the colour to somewhat the pitch of the shadows

which inevitably fall upon the walls of a room: stand off, give your whole great mind to the subject for a few moments, and behold, you cannot fail to see what is most becoming. *Ergo*, what suits one fresh face, suits another; what suits one pale, rubicund, sallow, brown or grey face, suits another.

You cannot—it would be inhospitable to—paint your walls with a colour that *only* becomes yourself; you can and you ought to select a general, warm, comfortable tint that is agreeable to the majority. Exceptions must of course take care of themselves.

A beautiful complexion, like grey hair, is easy enough to cater for. Everything is becoming to it, and it enhances most colours. But the ordinary healthy face, neither beauteous nor plain, without any vivid colours, is the safest guide. As we see when we lay our hands on gay fabrics, every colour suggests its complementary; and the more vivid the colour, the more pronounced the suggestion of its opposite. Blue is apt to turn the skin yellow, and only suits those very fair skins which need a little warmth and luminosity; it often suits the hair when it does not suit the face, and so the cheek is unwisely sacrificed to the (so-called) *golden* locks. Green, both dark and light, often creates the same yellowness, a sallow pallor, but a very *yellow* green, like ripe moss, does the reverse. Red of a soft subdued kind is very becoming: a vivid red like that called Turkey, worn with daffodils, a violent mixture much affected by præ-Raphaelites, should *never* be braved without the safeguard of a lovely complexion—cream and roses—it darkens the skin so much. I may

add, colours so strong are really painful, irritating, to some sensitive spectators; and unselfish people should not disregard a fact for which there is always a scientific reason. I have known the comfort and the eloquence of a distinguished man to be checked by the propinquity of a mass of distasteful red. I can sympathise, since there is a piercing, acrid, aniline blue, in a dress of which I could hardly talk to my dearest friend (only I know no friend would wear it). Yellow is extremely disagreeable to many persons, although the colour really suits most faces, which in London are always apt to be sallow; the brightest yellow pales down immensely by gas or any yellow light, even if over-strong by the electric light of the day. Primrose becomes white, and like real white, that means grey. Of course every colour is less violent on a wall than in a dress which constantly crosses the light, on account of the softening influence of the shadows and distance, and I have seen bright red in a wall (not dark red, which is very difficult to light), broken by ancient picture-frames of deep-cut, variegated gold, form a good and not too obtrusive background to persons who would have been ruined by dresses of such red.

Helpers.

Of course you cannot yourselves paint your walls or paper them; I hope you have something better to do! A really thoughtful decorator who can mix paints and respect your likings is invaluable. He will come if you call for him—call loudly enough.

If you want an industrious slave to furnish your room after a given period because you have not patience to collect the elements, that is one thing; he lives round the corner, and makes it his business to 'pick up,' or rather fabricate, pieces of furniture which he thinks suitable. But if you want an adviser who, naturally gifted with art feeling, has turned his powers in the direction of house-decoration, and who decorates by harmonising the laws of art with the tastes, habits, and needs of the inmates—if you want such a man, you must wait for him, he does not live round the corner; he is not ubiquitous.

Many houses decorated by Mr. William Wallace, which are well relieved by individuality of the highest class, deserve mention. Mr. John Stevenson's house, built and decorated by himself, and several houses decorated by Owen Jones, and especially by Cottier, are valuable contributions to domestic art. The names of bad decorators, large and dismal as my experience is both of their powers and their prices, I forbear to give.

There are people who love light—large windows which open easily, small carpets which are easily shaken, gay colours. Let them have them. There are others who like darkness, and prefer the smallest panes and most difficult bolts and hinges: give them their way, in no other wise can we get the individual element, *originality*, in a room. There are shortsighted persons who dread polished boards (which are no doubt a hateful institution and destructive of all grace of gait) and the up-turned corners of rugs: give them a secure large single carpet. Some like short dumpy curtains that

just touch the floor; others like the majestic lines of sweeping folds. Both are to be respected.

It is not quiet tones, nor vivid tones, which make or mar a beautiful room; and there is no downright law as to whether velvet is better than rep, or cotton than silk; why one should be sacred to this piece of furniture, or that to another. It is the thought and the skill which can use all things fitly and well, and make them subserve an intelligible purpose. It is the delicate, practised perception which places such a colour here, such another there—which *feels* how to craftily mingle richness with paucity of colour, so as not to tire the senses by either —how to avoid both pomposity and barrenness. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. This discrimination divides the born decorator from the mere purveyor of reigning fashions, the artist from the upholsterer.

I know a few persons in almost every rank of life who possess real native good taste: their rooms invariably have the *cachet* of individuality—a bowl of red berries, a little pot with some weed in it which for the moment has its own pretty lesson to teach—some novel use of the fender, with quaint trivets and gay dishes; some white tulip in a dark corner; some bright apple laid on a shelf that needs its shining rind—the original touch comes unexpectedly, now this, now that: here, like a sparkling dew-drop, gone, like a bird's wing.

There are moods of heart when the fairest hues cut like a shrewd pain, when the softest curves feel harsh; when grave tones and severe lines lend a mute relief because the eyes are holden by an inward enemy. Such possibilities must be borne in mind in decorating a room

whose colours cannot be put off like a gown, and therefore a room does not admit of such violent contrasts and surprises as dress which is soon changed. Still it is not for such sad souls—at least in their sadness—that beauty ripens her free, sweet gifts; and as the lesson of life is to bear and to recover, it is a kindlier task to cheer than to depress, though it should be done with tact and tenderness.

Let, then, our homes reflect our warmest and most sympathising moods so far as art has the making of them, and let the art be the very best of its kind, however little. Let them fit our daily wants as the shell its fish and the plume its bird.

Helpers who Hinder.

I have said much about loving and studying art, and much about the importance of thinking out one's own conclusions; but for the sake of the many who need a helping hand at first, who must have aid to bring forth the budding ideas without overmuch labour and sorrow, I must add a word or two about our helpers.

Who are our helpers?

The artists ought to be: those who have had the energy, the advantages of study and education, and have grown, or are growing, rich upon the popular interest in æsthetics. But who would ever dream of sending for a Royal Academician to paint his walls and ceilings now?

To appreciate art, we must understand it; to understand it, we must have it sufficiently about us, within our reach, awaiting the momentary glance or thought when

the mind is open, easy, withdrawn from sordid preoccupations.

But the artists themselves (I am speaking collectively, with noble exceptions in my mind) hinder the public from ever amending, by keeping the best art beyond their reach, and granting them, for the maturing of their taste, only the refuse of their own study. One would think sometimes in hearing these gentlemen's remarks, and especially in reading artists' written views on art, that it is a prime privilege to gaze at their pictures once or twice in a gallery, and that for this no payment can be too high, no patience too great. But what do we owe them? They seem to grudge the unfortunate public every pearl (if pearl it be) which they scatter. They forget how costly it is for a family to visit even the Royal Academy often. They talk of the artist's 'noble independence' of public opinion; and of his 'moral courage' in destroying whatever pleases the outsider's eye, as the painter Leys is said to have done, as though they hardly knew the meaning of the words they use.

But they teach us little, and that grudgingly and of necessity, without, I fear, being at all independent of the buzzing admirers who buy their pictures.

It is true, we see in all English art of the highest aim, from Watts's lofty and poetic conceptions to Poynter's unmerciful portraits, from Leighton's sweet opal ghosts to Millais's costly sketches, that art is meant to be a thing apart, not for the herd: not to teach the herd, nor gladden it, but to satisfy those who can judge accurately of the skill expended. This in

itself is no generous but a vainglorious instinct, underlying the artists' contempt for *the unknowing*, the 'beasts of the people.'

How can we thank, how greatly should we honour, those few men who, repudiating class-prejudice, deign to recognise the sole real function of the artist—to educate the unknowing, to chronicle the best thoughts, aspirations, sympathies of his period, represented by that 'herd' of which he himself forms one atom, as the priest educates and teaches those from whose ranks he sprang. Mr. Walter Crane, Mr. Burne Jones, Mr. Charles Eastlake, Mr. Morris, Mr. Owen Jones, Mr. William Burges, who being an architect was peculiarly fitted to understand how to harmonise colour and construction, have designed for wall-papers, windows, curtains, plate; Mr. Caldecott, like Mr. Crane, for cheap childish books, and thus have had more influence in raising public taste in 'some of the least of these,' than the rest have had in half a century's exhibiting at the Royal Academy and Bond Street show-rooms.

Architects should all be decorators, and *vice versâ*, and no artists should be above designing for a ceiling or panel now, as they never were of old. If it be *infra dig.* to paint on plaster or wood, why not on thick rags—i.e. canvas?

But *how* is the artist to educate this public whom he so scorns? By giving them his best work, by habituating them to good work in all things great and small till they *like* it, just as the missionary habituates the savage to civilised manners until they become necessary to him. Far be it from me to speak disrespectfully of the

public in comparing them to savages, but as the artist, so soon as he puts pen to paper, is never tired of sneering at the helpless outside community who cannot paint, I must use a simile he is likely to understand.

Some recent authoritative 'Lectures on Art' are typical of the common artistic mind, whose way of reasoning (however deft may be the hand, however devoted the heart, in the cause of culture) is far from good or wise or true, and whose mood towards the ladder which has led up to fame is often most ungrateful and unreasonable.

We find the real duties of the artist as priest and counsellor in the religion of beauty, quite ignored; we find constant complaints of the difference in the aim and results of our modern work as compared with that of the ancients. This difference is enormously exaggerated, for the ancients were not so very unlike ourselves. The main reason assigned for our 'fall' is 'that artists from motives of indolence or interest have allowed themselves to be led by the opinion of the public instead of being as of old indifferent to it.' To the first part of this amazing observation the public may answer that their opinion has been very little regarded, and hence the picture-buyers are but a small section of the public, and that small section is composed chiefly not of picture-lovers, nor of people who care for art in its highest sense, but dealers who buy to sell again. Naturally they like to 'buy safe,' so does even a picture-lover; and to object to that opens the door to ugly suspicions. But the vast prices given for certain works by no means prove that art is

loved or encouraged by the masses (though the general public *do* care for art and for beauty when they can get it). The public supports the picture galleries, public and private, though the practice of paying one shilling per head to see one picture for a few minutes is a wrong and mischievous one. Our artists' pictures ought to be free to all during some portion of the year.

The real reason of the difference between the aims and results of ancient and modern art is that the public having been excluded from easy reach of the best art, forget its true use and value; and their ignorance re-acts injuriously on the artist because he is, after all, one of them, and cannot breathe another atmosphere than that of his time. He is responsible for their dulness. Certain people's affected admiration of Leys destroying whatever pleased the outsider, combined with their morbid objection to fault-finding (which they call 'criticism') stamps them as fretful porcupines indeed. If the public find fault, they are railed at: if they are pleased, why then destroy the work—it *must* be worthless: if the public are silent, where is the proper encouragement of art?

The assertion that the old masters were indifferent to their public, it is necessary to answer with a query—When? and who? Not Holbein, painting portraits, saddles, walls, designing for brooches and confectionery, and anything else he was told to do. Not Cimabue, sitting in his shed open to passers-by, and hearing their criticisms *pro* and *con.*—and who knows how in consequence he may have modified this and that, perceiving that his meaning was not clear or that some stronger

chord might be touched? How grand was that strength which bore and courted criticism and made it serve him—for how else won he that tremendous popularity, so that his Madonna was borne through the glad city in a pageant—save by educating-up his public, being always in contact with the public, expressing their deepest emotions, the spirit of his time?

How did all the Gothic painters and decorators become great, but by speaking the heart of the people out, in language they could all understand? When books were not, or few, the artist was the nation's spokesman, and had he been deaf to what was wanted in his time, he would have starved at the least.

How did the great Renascence painters win the world but by the same sympathy with its impulses? How did Ghiberti triumph in the competition for the Cathedral doors even against such rivals as Donatello and Brunelleschi, but because he had courted criticism by working openly among the people, and so profited by hints in praise and blame from every quarter whereby he carried the whole city with him?[1] Many another name rises up to rebuke the morbid anger of artists with 'outsiders.' Let the true knight enter the arena with robuster frame. There is no surer sign of weakness than a dread of being touched, be the critics wise or silly; the power to criticise, like the power of free-will, is a common right which should be fostered, guided aright, not crushed.

The Gothic and Renascence masters became great because they caught the spirit of the people and expressed it to perfection. They carried the language of

[1] Vasari.

art to its apex. Their mastery of the tools was complete; but it was not the mastery of tools which made them great, but their having something to say, and not only the sense to say it, but the determination to be understood.

The Old Masters' Mischief.

Probably this stupendous skilfulness has damaged us somewhat. Ever since painting became technically unsurpassable, ever since anatomy became a science, the 'afterborns' have been numbed, petrified by their very appreciation of the accomplished facts. None but those who have tried it know the difficulties of *technique*, the handicraft; but admiration of genius ought not to stultify effort in the new work that lies under our hand—it is like being so amazed at the powers of Homer that we will not write any new books.

Indeed, so necessary is it that art should be the spontaneous product of its own time, that we may be sometimes tempted to wish that there had never been any 'old masters,' so fully has their skill nipped all future originality, and so often has their position been made a throne for servile incapacity. The great picture galleries have paralysed the Italian painting of the nineteenth century. Hogarth felt this about his own age: he says, among his pithy remarks on the new Royal Academy, 'I am told that one of their leading objects will be, sending young men abroad to study the antique statues, for such kind of studies may sometimes improve an exalted genius, but they will not create it; and

whatever has been the cause, this same travelling to Italy has, in several instances that I have seen, seduced the student from nature and led him to paint marble figures, in which he has availed himself of the great works of antiquity, *as a coward does when he puts on the armour of an Alexander*, for with similar pretensions and similar vanity the painter supposes he shall be adored as a second Raphael Urbino.'

True: the great masters have been destructive by their greatness, as a big tree is destructive of the grass blades beneath its arms. Even Reynolds was blinded; 'Study' (he says) 'the great works of the great masters *for ever*. Study nature attentively, but always with those masters in your company; consider them as models which you are to imitate,' &c.

Had this been right reasoning and healthy truth, Giotto would never have reformed art, for he had no old masters to cling to. No one can learn to walk till he quits hold of the guide. The much-lauded old masters were robust, bold, feeling their feet, looking frankly about them. They formed their own manner and *technique*. They painted what they saw, felt, and heard in their own way; but they did not sit apart sneering, it is more probable that they talked, explained and proved their meaning to crowds of pupils. They were prized, because, as Emerson says, 'we love those who tell us what we know—' *that* teaches us to know it.

The priest must educate his flock; he will do it, never by scolding and sneering at the flock, but by drawing it nearer, using it to what is good for it. Art is for the people, and the people maintain their priest.

Reform from Below

Probably we shall never get the priests who have developed in the present unhealthy, unhelpful school to do more for us. Still the demand will create the supply. The reform will come from below—from the shops, in fact.

As the tradesmen find that the public discriminate, and *insist* on better designs and better work, they will provide it. A superior level of designing power will be found among the shop-designers, who will begin to attend art-classes, and model from nature. Here and there a man of genius will spring up, and the tradesman will have sense to recognise him. Hosts of buyers will support the improved standard of work; thousands can afford 5*l.* when not one in a thousand can afford 50*l.* Wall-papers, gowns, jewellery, plate, china, carpets, cabinets, and numberless necessities of daily life will become works of art. We shall get really good panels for our rooms, really good fresco-painting, if we demand it, such as may be obtained in Italy.

Then the Philistine will no more buy a sketch in oil paint for a sum which might pension a soldier or historian and his posterity *for ever*. The skilfullest works will lose their fancy value, and will stand on their merits. There are already rumours that pictures 'don't sell' which would have sold a few years ago. *Tant mieux*. We shall do without our artists—as they pretend they can do without us!—and we shall have better art!

Misuse of Pictures.

After all,—when we shake off the fetters of association—what a ridiculous object is a 'picture,' hanging on a wall by a string! What connection has it with the wall-colour, which it hides; or with the lines of the panels, which it commonly contradicts! Unless built and fitted into its place, really or ostensibly, a 'picture' is surely an object contrary to good taste —especially when a number are crowded together; and the frame is often a shining eye-sore. However beautiful the work, is it not unmeaning where it hangs? A picture is really meant to deceive the eye; to create a false vista, through a supposed opening in the wall. That is what pictures on walls were originally painted for, to extend the apparent area, much as a mirror does —pleasant where a fine real outlook was unattainable To this end subjects were painted on classic walls, as we find in the Roman *House of Germanicus*, and in Pompeiian frescoes, and their frames were the architectural structure of the wall. To this end tapestries were woven in Gothic times, and pictures painted with architectural borders like alcoves, meant to be as deceptive as possible. How entirely, then, we mistake the function of a picture when we hang, for instance, a portrait, where by no manner of means that person could be!—when we place a peaceful landscape close adjoining a battle-scene or sea-scape—or set a subject with small figures nigh one with big figures which belong to another focus of sight altogether! To the thoughtful spectator our

picture-hanging is chaos, and the classics would hoot us, Annamaniacs and all.

Is not a picture, rightly understood, a portable wall or panel, and not to be hung up like a hat or coat, on a peg? Ought not the panel-edge, now gilt, because gold sets off pictures well, to be echoed in other panels or openings, windows, doors, &c., in similar pattern and similar gold? We may excuse ourselves by the exigencies of poverty, or modern conditions—but the exigencies should be removed, the fact remains.

Paint was intended to be applied in domestic art, as Mr. William Burges applied it, as an outer finish to permanent constructions of every kind; if on a wall it should form a panel, and may be treated in the round as a supposed outlook; if on furniture, it should interpret and adorn it, and should be treated in the flat; and this is a rational view. But the question whether wall pictures ought ever to represent natural scenes, or whether *all* mural decoration must be flat and conventionally treated, as some decorators, like Owen Jones, aver, we must leave the reformed artists of the future to fight out between them.

CHAPTER X.

ON OUR STREETS.

Trees.

For many a man that may not stand a pull,
Yet liketh it him at the wrestlyng for to be,

says Chaucer in his 'Parliament of Birds;' and a dissertation on street-architecture would be as far from my powers as it is outside the purpose of the present book. Still, a humble plea for a little beauty in our streets may not be quite out of place.

Black as are our old streets, crooked without picturesqueness, and not over healthy, there is an interest attaching to them which we could not transfer to newly-built rows of clean houses. Every narrow and muddy old road has its associations, its haunting figures of the past which we should be sorry to lose; and the Thames Embankment itself cost many a sigh to people not blind to the advantages it offered.

But we might clean up, brighten, and add comfort to our old streets without disturbing the lines or destroy

ing associations worth keeping, in a good many cases which we neglect. We might plant more trees, as in Paris and all continental towns, which would not only improve the look but the sanitary condition of the atmosphere. We might materially improve the drainage in places by legislating against family alliances between sanitary inspectors and bad landlords; and we might invent a form of cement or paint sufficiently waterproof to throw off rainstreams without arresting the soot in them.

The advantage of trees in clearing the air of smuts must be apparent to all who have trees near their houses. Virginia creepers and other plants on house-fronts are a perpetual refreshment to the eye in summer, and a few boxes of gay flowers are a boon to all the passers-by as well as oneself.

But plants, in our dull streets, do not tell against dirty brick. I recently noticed, *for the first time*, a creeper-smothered house in a narrow street I often pass; but the brickwork is so dingy that it neither throws up the green, as red brick would do, nor is materially improved by the leaves, which in the absence of much sunlight form with it one uniform dingy tint. People ought really to point their brick oftener, or cover it, like the cleanly Dutch, with a coat of paint; over this a quick-growing creeper would be a really picturesque ornament, as plants against a coloured fence invariably are. For London-bred green things require a background which exhibits them, as much as any other artistic objects.

What a refreshment to the eye would be trees planted along Regent Street, with an occasional seat

such as Paris found good and necessary. Even in winter, when they are black and bare, the netted branches break the blankness of the scene. The objection hitherto urged is that our populace are more destructive than the same class abroad; and that all such decoration would be visited by the street Arab's propensity to cut signs and wonders in the bark. But this is no longer a valid objection. The Arab is mending his ways as we mend *him*, and the hapless green strangers about the Thames Embankment and Leicester Square have come to no great harm.

Among trees, the plane appears one of the best suited to London. It is less easily killed by soot than others, owing to its cleanly personal habits. It strives so hard to keep itself wholesome by changing its bark year by year. The plane appears less popular with poets than other trees, and is seldom mentioned; it is hard to say why. It is a very stately tree, with a broad, handsome, well-cut leaf capitally adapted to crack on the fist after the manner of schoolboys; and the seeds, great balls of soft green and brown velvet, are surely as pretty as acorns!

Let us beautify our streets by planting more trees; and let us cease to deface them by sticking up metal chimneys.

Our Chimneys.

The chimneys of London are indeed a remarkable outcome of civilisation, and deserve more attention; but the English seldom lift their eyes in walking, being too

much afraid of puddles, and hence the ornaments upon the house-tops are greatly neglected.

I have often thought that a foreigner from the wilds of Weissnichtwo, some Teufelsdrökh with a sense of

FIG. 74.—Our chimneys.

1. Where are you going, my dear?
2. Jack Tar beset.
3. Conscious virtue.
4. Father, father, I come to confess!
5. Any old hats! Old hats to sell!
6. Japanese art.
7. Æsthetes in ecstasies.

humour, some Don Quixote, might easily suppose that the attitudes of chimneys bore some intelligible meaning. They really *do* look as though they meant something; the roof being a legitimate and conspicuous

quarter for large decorative figures, here as well as in Greece.

May I venture to suggest the kind of moral lessons likely to be conveyed, and to point out the opportunity lost in not making them still clearer?

But a truce to satire. Whilst criticising our streets we must give our countrymen credit for one earnest attempt at reform.

Coloured Houses.

The latest product of Art-Protestantism in the way of street ornament is the coloured house. A few years ago, apart from a shop, such a thing was unknown in London. When it came in, landlords wept for it, newspapers railed at it, and the public sniffed and jeered. But the painted house has gone through the usual course of all reforms—abuse, pity, ridicule, imitation.

We have all suffered from the difficulty of finding our way about such long, black, featureless ravines as Harley, Wimpole, Welbeck Streets, St. George's and Belgrave Roads, in Pimlico, or such dismal quadrangles as Manchester, Portman, and Berkeley Squares—all the houses looking alike, all painted a delicate creamy white, and all equally black. Mayfair and Marylebone rivalled each other in uniformity; a new door-knob or a blue door represented, but a very few years ago, the utmost stretch of metropolitan imagination. To trifle with the surface of a wall seemed not only a dangerous solecism, but something like a defiance of the vestry, or even the Board of Works. We are the slaves of uniformity! It

is endeared to us even by soot. For generations we have repressed most individual attempts to be better than the rest, and particularly in dress and decoration inside and outside the house.

Well, human faces all look alike if they are sufficiently grimy. Were such griminess the rule, we should hardly notice the features, but should have to devise some system of numbering, like houses, in order to know people apart. But we drew the line at faces, though outside slovenliness and filth were the rule till recently in the older neighbourhoods, whether patrician or plebeian. How long the inhabitants of Manchester, Berkeley, and Portman Squares tolerated dead cats on the unkempt flower beds! but they revolted at last, and called for the dustman and the gardener. How long have people bemoaned the want of mural architecture in England, unconscious that what they really wanted was colour, whereby to see what architecture they had got! Gazing up at the black faces of the clubhouses, no bas-relief, no stucco pattern, or stone frieze caught the eye —why? because the projections, which ought to tell light against the shadows of depressions, grew blacker than the depressions just in proportion to their projection into the sooty air. The result was that appearance of flatness and a level tint, for only occasionally have we sunshine enough to light up dark edges.

But indeed there is a good deal worth lighting up— a good deal worth making visible—in our London façades and porticos. At the beginning of the Greek revival a century since, a large number of buildings of considerable merit sprang up, designed by well-

instructed architects, such as Inigo Jones, Chambers, the Adamses—that is, the merit was that of a good copy, the original being out of reach; but with all their research for Attic precedent, the Greco-maniacs overlooked one thing which was unquestionably Greek—colour in the streets. Excavation, and study, and the laborious suture of fragments had taught them much—given us many beautiful things; but these were, after all, the bones without the flesh, the form without the life; they did not know then, as we know now, that the frieze of the Parthenon was a blaze of colour, that all the capitals and bases whose dead forms were lovely possessed an added grace which had long decayed in the earth.

Pall Mall is a street of palaces, but the greater part of us have only just begun to suspect it. The Regent's Park possesses whole terraces of admirable construction; Marylebone is full of finely modelled lintels and porticos, and even bas-reliefs inserted in the large blank spaces, which deserve more attention. But in London it is possible to live with a superb bas-relief under one's eyes for years and not know it, owing, as I have said, first to the absence of sunlight, and next to the fact that in our sooty air the projecting portions get blacker than their ground, and so a level tint is formed. But why the dirt should be an argument against the only remedy for dirt is inconceivable, and looks very much like a 'vicious circle.' In a bright atmosphere no doubt colours are more brilliant, perhaps more enjoyed, and last longer; but in a dull one it seems but common sense to try and relieve monotony, even if it has to be done very often.

Often, indeed. And here another question obtrudes

itself immediately. Why we should endure the nuisance of dirt, costly as it is, British conservatism alone knows. There have been many suggestions for clearing the carbon-laden atmosphere of London and Manchester, but they do not seem to be taken up by builders. The system advocated by Mr. Spence in 1871, of each house consuming its own smoke or utilising it by carrying it through the drains, is one which ought to have received more attention both from the philanthropic and æsthetic, since the deodorising of the sewage by the ammonia produced by burning coal might save many a precious life per annum, and the purifying of the air by diverting the smoke away from it would preserve, if not life, at least paint! Our darkest and most mischievous fogs are largely composed of the smoke driven westward from the east end of London. Our statistics show a grave proportion of deaths by fog-poisoning as well as drain-poisoning. Mr. Spence would persuade us that this fog is really the right thing in the wrong place; and it is possible that some day new attention to sanitary measures will render our dirty city not only more healthy and more happy, but more beautiful, by admitting here the sunlight that really often exists outside London in winter as well as in summer, but cannot get through our choking atmosphere. *Mais revenons à nos moutons*—our coloured houses. Welbeck Street (Rev. H. R. Haweis) took the initiative in 1873 in a house painted moss-green, relieved by red and black in the reveals of the windows and the balcony—an effort almost simultaneously supported by Townshend House (Mr. Alma Tadema) in the Regent's Park. The shock

was at first so great to the popular mind, that little groups would collect and stare opposite, as if expecting a raree-show to emerge. But in the year following one or two neighbouring houses began to lay a little green and chocolate on their window sills in timid recognition of the improvement in the aspect. A second house in Welbeck Street turned red, with a sage-green door. Sir Charles Lyell, in Harley Street, had ventured on a bright blue door; but this vivid colour, being unsupported by colour elsewhere on the façade, was not successful as a contribution to the world of art.

Year by year the parents of the movement were amused to see how abuse was melting into that sincerest form of flattery—imitation. As street after street began to furbish itself up, and don rainbow hues, the obtusest people suddenly awoke to perceive that they possessed a pretty cornice, and they picked it out with two drabs in lieu of one; then they thought that pseudo-Greek forms might venture upon the hues of Greek pottery—black, red, and pale yellow. This having happily a kind of precedent in the reviving admiration of classicism, caught the awakened fancy, and it is now curious to see how in Mayfair and Belgravia numerous houses have thus been copying each other in every shade of black, red, and yellow—some exceedingly well done, others unintelligently. Still the worst of them is an improvement on dirty white, for nothing in our climate wears worse than that.

Cavendish Square boasts several coloured houses, Gloucester Place many. Lady Combermere's house in

Belgrave Square, and that of Lady Herbert of Lea, denote the conversion of the aristocracy. Wimpole and Harley Streets show some pretty combinations of colour —one lately painted with a capital mixture of dull red relieved by yellow (not Etruscan), another in lavender with crimson lines, are real additions to the movement, and form good and harmonious features. The new hotel in Waterloo Place has thus made itself an ornament to the street. The Athenæum Club has brought into view its fine frieze by colouring it in two tints, throwing up the figures, pale yellow on a red ground, an enormous improvement. My own house proves how a skilful use of colour enlarges the apparent size of the windows. Indeed, every little scrap of good architectural work can be enunciated by a little colour, much to the relief of the maligned race of architects, and to that of shortsighted pedestrians, who look for the bright space of colour with far greater ease than the half-obliterated lettering which may or may not occur at the corner of the street.

It is amusing, too, how often people who have been bitterest on these coloured houses when first painted are heard to say that 'now that the colour has toned down' (in about six weeks) 'they really like it extremely.' The fact is, the paint has not 'toned down,' there has not been time; but their eye has got 'toned up'—and so the circle widens. And who, looking at the sour, viridescent spasms which attack stucco in wet weather, can honestly think that definite colours well combined are not an improvement? Colours last clean rather better than white; they need cost no more, or very

little; they are less trouble than 'pointing' brick, and a good advertisement for the house painter.

It will no doubt be necessary before long to legislate for this almost intemperate fit of reform; for such terraces as Hanover and Sussex, &c., Regent's Park, ought unquestionably to be coloured all at once, all alike, and if possible by the same hand, and the concurrent taste of the inmates ought to be consulted by the landlords. But in streets or squares where the most heterogeneous architecture exists, heterogeneous colour (with proper regard to laws of art) can fairly be allowed; and the selfishness which would relegate all brightness and decoration to interiors ought to give way to the kinder impulse to put a little of what pleases us in our homes, where the people can enjoy it—outside our houses.

Street Nomenclature.

Many of the names of streets have a great historic or legendary interest; some, as in France, appear simply quaint, such as *Rue du Cherche Midi*, *Rue du Grand Diable*, &c. Great men, and great deeds, are, perhaps, in no wise better remembered than by a street name, which is in so many mouths so many times a day; and Paris appears alive to the fact, since almost every change in her political system is commemorated by a most confusing change in street names.

In Antwerp it is pleasant to see how the great Flemings live unforgotten in their old haunts, the street wherein they lived, or a street hard by, bearing their

names like a perpetual monument. Rubens and Van Dyck are recalled again and again, on the corners of the streets, on the restaurants, on the quays, on the barges gliding about the smooth Scheldt; for they are ranked by virtue of their genius as high as any wealthy noble, or unscrupulous warrior, or successful cotton-spinner, is in England. In fact, it is difficult to walk for five minutes in any direction without seeing the name of Rubens or Van Dyck.

In Italy the great men are remembered. The House of Raphael, of Rienzi, of Pietro da Cortona, is pointed out by every *vetturino*—where the great man was born, where he worked, where he addressed the city, where he died, is not forgotten. We have many old English streets named after the trades or guilds to which they were given up, as Cornhill, Bread Street, Poultry, Cordwainer and Silver Streets, Goldsmiths' Row, &c.; and this is as it should be in a commercial country. We have a few which record proud deeds and names: Southampton Street, Strand, is named after Lady Rachel Russell, the perfect wife, who was daughter of the Earl of Southampton; Cumberland Street after the victor of Culloden Field; Trafalgar Square commemorates a victory but not the victor's name. Some associations we should be sorry to give up:—e.g. Knightrider Street was the route of knights riding to take part in the Smithfield tourneys; Essex Street, Strand, is named after Elizabeth's ill-fated favourite; Hare Court, Temple, after Sir N. Hare, the same queen's Master of the Rolls.

Several Lothair Streets sprang up after Lord Beaconsfield's novel was published, and of course every little ill-

built row of villas must be called 'Albert' or 'Victoria.' But how long will it be before England will think fit so to honour her literary and artistic giants? We are as well off as our neighbours for shining lights of learning; worse off than most for novelty in nomenclature; but when shall we see a Chaucer Street, named after him who first stamped the English tongue, the 'fynder of our faire language,' our first popular historian and novelist and greatest poet? When shall we see a Shakspere Road, a Gainsborough or Reynolds Square, a Spenser Place, a Newton or Faraday Crescent?

There has been but one exception—Milton, to whom the notorious Grub Street, sacred to unscrupulous scribblers and the nursery of lampoons, was about fifty years ago re-dedicated—a pleasing little attention for which 'tis pity he cannot feel grateful. The squalor and long-established ill-fame of the place must have been thought peculiarly appropriate to the memory of the refined and conscientious 'Lady of Christchurch College;' or was it because anyone seeking a 'Paradise Lost' would most surely find it in that agreeable spot?

I *must* compare the level of British interest in her great dead with that in, say, Switzerland, Italy, Holland, —almost anywhere—by a story told me by our distinguished tragedian, Mr. Irving—yea, even at Stratford-on-Avon, where the munificent exertions of the Mayor and others have preserved so many relics of Shakspere, and might have been expected to arouse among the most ignorant of the townsfolk some interest, and some pride, in what Shakspere had done to deserve it. Mr. Irving, then, was in Stratford-on-Avon, and caught a native

who directed him to the celebrated birthplace. He was moved by the man's manner to question him. 'Who *was* this man Shakspere that they make this fuss over? Did he belong to the town, and what did he do?' After a perplexed pause, the man said hesitatingly:—'I think, sir, he was a—kind o'—writer.' 'What did he write?' pursued his questioner, 'was it in the newspapers? or the magazines? or was he a sign-writer—can't you tell me *anything* about him?' 'I think, sir,' then said the man after a still longer hesitation, 'I *think* he writ in Bible.'

Mr. Irving added, after telling me this story, that he considered this one of the highest tributes that could be paid to Shakspere.

Street Nuisances.

London is no doubt annually improving. Thirty years ago our mothers said that beggars were fewer and meeker than of yore; and within the last ten or fifteen years, certain well-known objects, bowed and twisted and shivering, have disappeared, and I have not seen the two Oxford Street cripples, one skating through life on a little board, the other crawling onward by the aid of clubbed feet and an extensive vocabulary, for some time. Moreover, dead cats and egg-shells are rarer, and the gardener and the dustman, as aforesaid, give attention to the once-neglected squares. So far, ugliness is decreasing in our streets. But much remains to be done. We could altogether dispense with the bloated and purple-faced 'flower-girls' who sell—horrid contrast!—violets and spring-flowers, and abuse you if you don't

buy; and the street singers, whose mock-sorrow and sharp glance warn you to keep your pocket-side away. There are still times when the policeman would be the greatest possible ornament to our streets—an ornament, alas! still rare, and without which no other charm can exist. And we yet nurse a wild hope that in the far future, which we may not live to see, covered streets, or double streets, like the Chester Rows, may be provided for those hapless foot-passengers who must walk in all weathers, an arrangement which appears to succeed very well in the long Rue Rivoli and the Victor Emanuel Arcade at Milan; and last, not least, clean cabs really worth the somewhat high fares we already pay, which we might enter without fear of vermin or infection.

In this last matter, not only every continental, but every provincial English, town is better off than London.

CHAPTER XI.

CONCLUSION.

Indigenous Art.

I HUMBLY trust that my strictures on modern English decorations may open the eyes of a few to the remediable flaws in taste, and necessity for founding an English school of design. This must be no poor copy of the thoughts of other nations and races, and it must be rather Gothic than Classic in its type. At present, on reviewing nearly four centuries of British decorative work since the Renascence, what may be said to stand forth as a truly indigenous growth, or to have originated anything like a school? Nothing, save perhaps Gibbons' carving, up to the present century. Our goldsmiths and carvers may have been many and talented; they may have varied somewhat the foreign methods and designs which they received; in the middle ages they undoubtedly gave a certain original stamp to the architecture given us by Saxons and Normans; but art on the whole must be considered an exotic

like many other things which we have used well when they came to us.

Britain has always been ruled by foreigners both in art and politics. Painting, engraving, chasing precious metals, cameo-cutting, all these crafts came to us from overseas, and chiefly after the Renascence. Our proficiency with the needle which once distinguished us among the nations is practically ours no longer; we have no embroiderers to compare with the Italian and Spanish lace-makers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, any more than we have smiths to compare with Spanish and German cutlers and iron-workers—though Smith *is* so common a name! And as for our carving in the boasted oak of Old England, it is done by steam nowadays and beneath contempt.

In the present century, however, our præ-Raphaelite painters,—a very recent growth—ought to be excepted as a definite and I think indigenous school; the distinctive element in it, the straightforward literalness mingled oddly with a very tender fancy, is 'Gothic' in its nature. No people are more easily led by their imagination than the seeming sluggish and phlegmatic Britons.

This band of painters have formed a peculiar scheme of decoration which I do not find out of England, depending on boldly variegated colour and much gold, as though a true and natural advance upon early English colouring, interrupted by the Renascence.

One of the best examples of this new kind of decoration which I have seen is that in Trinity Chapel, Cambridge, which is in tone at once tender and rich, and many of the designs (perhaps adapted from antique ones) are

extremely beautiful and suggestive both on ceiling and walls. It is remarkable that during two recent visits to Cambridge, I inquired of many residents, Fellows of Colleges, &c., *who* conducted the redecoration of this important feature of Cambridge; and totally failed to find out. This is illustrative of the English interest in art and good art-workmen.

After a year's patient inquiry I discovered that Mr. Henry Holiday supervised the work, which accounts for its merit.

Much remains to be done before England can claim to be an artistic country. Modern teaching has corrected some blots in the intolerable school of design which ushered in the present century, but it has not yet chased from the domestic field the furniture which makes home hideous, nor taught people to think for themselves.

We must throw off the ill-fitting classic garb, which, as I have elsewhere shown, we have thrice tried and found unmanageable, and only take from classic sources the principles which made classic art great, applying them as beseems our climate, our classes, and our national character. The reform will not come from above, but from below—from the people, not the selfish and soporific 'æsthetes.'

It must start from Gothic times, *before Raphael*, and disregard nicknames if it would recover the graceful facility and happy freedom which characterised English fourteenth-century art, and made it a living product. The spirit is not dead, but sleepeth.

When our museums are thrown open on the only day in the week (Sunday) when the busy working man can

regularly visit them—and his visits must be *frequent* to be fruitful, not only on Bank holidays with his arms full of babies—the English artisan may suck in ideas of his own, and when he is a more cultivated individual than at present he will love his work better, and prize his own good name. At present it is our fault, the customer's in fact, that he is no better, and has never had the advantages common to other European countries, where the workman has been more lovingly educated and his name better remembered.

The public, who purchase, must also learn to appreciate what their artisans achieve, to distinguish good work from scamped; and not ignorantly censure, nor ignorantly praise.

And each one of us individually may aid the nation by self-culture; may make his own house a standing lesson and protest, by merely caring how his walls are covered, and how his goods are placed in juxtaposition. Whether or not he knows better than the rest, his caring and insisting on the right of individual thought and action are a support and assistance.

Help in Amateurs.

Nothing will help the reform better than the efforts of art-loving amateurs. Amateur blacksmiths, goldsmiths, carpenters, weavers, inlayers, will do more to force merit into professional quarters than any amount of letters in the 'Times' and preachments in books: just as the victories of girl students at Girton and Newenham have had some effect in shaming idlers in the

male universities. Amateurs seem as often as not to win prizes in mixed exhibitions of china painting, and in one or two other branches of industry we are sensible of a movement as of life pecking at the shell.[1] Of course the reason is that the amateur, given equal talent, has more time to give to the labour, and works for love of it; but if we pay the trade at all, we pay for time and skill both, and hurried or slovenly work ought to be cheap, while patient, long-suffering labour demands a higher fee.

When iron factors find that amateur work can provide for an existing demand, at a standard they cannot reach, will they not labour to provide for it? When silversmiths find their coarse, showy vulgarities remain on their hands, will they not speedily discover what the public really want? If skill is required, skill will be forthcoming; if beauty is wanted, beauty will arise. The demand educates the workman, and the general level of understanding among the body of purchasers is what really defines the standard of art in a country.

The designer and the workman can no longer be one, as once they were, when a founder meant bell-caster, cutler, maker of keys, guns, and statues, and anything else that could be cast and hammered: when a goldsmith was expected to be able to mould a vase like Luca della Robbia, carve a helmet, and do a hun-

[1] We may quote the beautiful goldsmith's work of the late Mr. George Cayley, for one of whose salvers Mr. Millais offered a picture of his son; and the wrought-iron ornaments, panels, candelabra, &c. turned out by the Messrs. Phelps, sons of the present Master of Sidney College, Cambridge, who work with enthusiasm in their forge. Some of their iron was recently exhibited at the Albert Hall Fine Arts Department.

dred other things that demanded the art knowledge he possessed. We cannot have all-round men in this position now, for the minute subdivisions in trade are the necessary result of a large and impatient demand. But we *can* give intelligent workmen some interest in the complete work of which they execute a portion: and there is no reason why educated artists should not provide designs, as did Le Pautre, for all kinds of decorative work, with (be it understood) due knowledge of the limits of each branch of art designed for, so that workmen have not to complain of the technical ignorance of the artist, as sometimes happens.

The designer for wrought iron must have some notion of what is possible in iron-hammering, as the architect of a fine palace must understand the science of building; a table or chair cannot be made from a design which is independent of the first principles of joints.

The Court Painter.

The revival of the ancient and honourable post of court painter and artist in ordinary to Her Majesty would be a radical support to the cause of art in England: for it would give prestige to a profession which, however cursorily encouraged by royal favour here and there, has for long received no direct recognition at Court like divinity, letters, and medicine.[1]

[1] The position of 'historical painter' to the Queen, now held by Mr. Sant, R.A., does not refute such an assertion. An historical painter, without continual occupation, or a definite effect on his age, is so far a dead letter.

The laureateship is, no doubt, an empty title, but it is an honourable one. Chaplaincy to Her Majesty is one equally honourable and equally empty. The former has, perhaps, less *raison d'être* than any other similar post, for poems are not needful upon every occasion, and it is but a minute branch of letters.

But the Court artist, were his position at all a revival of the ancient one, would be never without employment. He should be more or less an all-round man, such as Sir F. Leighton or Alma-Tadema, not exclusively a painter or architect, for the honour should not be confined to one branch of art. He should be a designer—an *artist*: capable of painting a portrait, designing a monument, or a fine building, a stencil pattern or a presentation sword: and he should be an Englishman. Designs thus provided by a man of culture, and probably genius, would filter down and gradually come into the market bearing the Sovereign's name. This would encourage others, and nurse the buds of native talent in very diverse directions, which continually appear, and continually are crushed.

The post would be better without an emolument which would cause violent jealousies among artists, and it might be shared by several persons, like the chaplaincy; but the personal influence of royalty and the pleasure of working even nominally under a Sovereign singularly dear, would create a feeling about art which has long been chrysalided if not dead.

In the old days when artists were truly artists, and felt it their vocation and right to beautify, without in-

vidious distinctions and conditions, work of high standard filled the channels it does not enter now.

I have earlier alluded to William the Florentine, Court painter to Henry III., and master of the works at Guildford Castle, supervising the wall decorations of Henry's palace, according to the old records, planning the drains, designing the stencils appropriate to various domestic events: such as 'borders well painted with images of our Lord and angels, with incense pots scattered over it.' I have spoken of William Torell, the goldsmith, who designed (probably hammered) Queen Eleanor's metal tomb, and may not improbably be the author of the sculptured crosses in her honour and the monument of Aylmar de Valence, Earl of Pembroke, in Westminster Abbey; and William Austin, of London, whom Flaxman praised so warmly. Who knows what plate, what rails, what caskets, and keys, and brazen fountains, as well as designs for other irrelevant things, were expected of Torell and Austin, and actually done by them? Many names, at least as great as any we have now, may be cited as men whose supreme talents were happily not confined to one little runlet of art, but rushed, or trickled, or flowed wheresoever the soil was ready for the stream.

May not these be taken as a precedent and support? Leonardo da Vinci fortified Florence, Holbein designed mansions and brooches, Giotto built the campanile of S. Maria del Fiore, besides painting pictures.

There is something very noble in this calling of an Artist as a beautifier, a mighty man—no mechanic bound by the petty fetters of trades-unionism.

A Word on Architecture.

Perhaps one of the reasons why we get no fine, nor even original, modern architecture is because the architect is so completely dissevered from the painter. Good as is much of his work, he has been educated in a groove of trim lines and tried effects, which he cannot get out of, nor do without. To the public, no doubt, a design which they have not seen before is as dreadful as the Ancient Mariner's glittering eye; but the artist, unlike the mechanic, educates his own public. Brunelleschi would not have been deterred from works of genius by the cavils of a vestry, nor William of Wykeham by the criticism of kings. Holbein's architectural designs have been remarked upon as resembling paintings: he introduced enrichments of terra-cotta, or moulded brickwork, inlaid his friezes with coloured tiles, made free use of paint and variegated bricks laid in zigzag patterns. The fact is, his painter's eye yearned for that without which form is but dead; and he made his buildings alive both with colour and form. The architect, with all his sense of proportion and delicate knowledge of light and shade, lacks one sense which the painter possesses, that of the value of colour. He has educated it out of himself, and cannot learn it from his books and measuring-tools. He is so hampered by superstitions and opposition that he is often but an upper class builder, when he *ought* to be a 'phœnix for fine and curious masonrie.' The painter's wider experience and love of changing and brilliant effects is likely to have originated many splendid architectural works

when it was, as once, associated with the builder's science. The warm bloom of colour which covered Greek buildings before time robbed them of their paint vivified the chaste and simple forms, which without it seem but cold and naked. Venetian Gothic was soft and lovely with colour—'the whole front,' says Ruskin, 'of a Gothic palace in Venice may be simply described as a field of subdued russet quartered with broad sculptured masses of white and gold; these latter being relieved by smaller inlaid fragments of blue, purple, and deep green.' English Gothic was coloured and gilt outside and in, and resonant with the 'harmony' of many golden fanes, as I pointed out earlier.

Such buildings must perforce have been designed by *artists*, not architects merely: they were buildings wherein now colour modified the form, now was modified by it as the design grew beneath the hand. Such was the elasticity of the finest Gothic art, such the due use of one material with another.

We have small precedent for naked stone save the precedent of Decay, and the prejudices founded on forgetfulness. 'The Renascence frosts came, and all perished,' says Ruskin. But the artist and architect, working hand in hand, might still produce new forms guided by old principles, full of beauty, truly original, not affected nor uncomfortable, without persecuting early Gothic, Jacobian brick, or classic monuments with servile and insolent parodies.

Glazed brick and tiles are capable of endless variations and durability beyond any other materials in our humid air. With terra-cotta and stone successful

experiments have already been tried by Mr. Street, Mr. Norman Shaw, Sir Gilbert Scott and his son, and others. But we shall never again have Brunelleschis and Buonarottis till our architects climb out of the slot of the great Worm—Precedent—and begin to consider what is really wanted in an English building: comfort, light and shade, brightness, as well as grandeur of effect.

A few of our decorators have effected a revolution in the colouring of our rooms; it is time for an artist of sufficient calibre to attack the chairs and pianos, iron bedsteads and wardrobes. Our drapers already reproduce very fine tissues from antique designs which they have industriously studied; it is time for the public to insist that the material of which they are made is worth the money paid, and not a specious concoction of chemical mud which insults the purse and wastes the patience. Outside our houses we have begun to be clean, and occasionally handsome; let us within doors study to be both. If we admit pictures, let them be of the highest quality, and properly set in the wall. Few things and good are better than much refuse. If we employ table-plate, let it be plain and inoffensive like the well-hammered pieces in Anne's day, or really an art-treasure like early Renascence plate. Let us aim at producing a 'first impression' of comfort and pleasantness, and let us see that the details of such an *ensemble* do not disappoint a second or third glance.

In dress, I have long preached that reform is needful; even the reformers need reforming; and it should be our constant aim to check by our example the vagaries in-

variably resultant from vitiation of the accustomed eye without confining fancy to a groove.

Let us handcuff no one; individual opinion is too precious to be sacrificed, and in art matters it is better to bear with the blunders of those whose taste offends you, if their taste results from thinking for themselves, than to reduce everybody to a dead level of propriety by Act of Parliament. Still criticism should be as free as action, and the average opinion of the mass forms a healthy law in itself.

Culture is attained by plentiful experience, many mistakes, and continual study of 'the Reason why;' and this is possible only to those with open eyes and open minds.

But the artist, the true Phœnix, whether cultured or not, is born, not made.

LONDON: PRINTED BY
SPOTTISWOODE AND CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE
AND PARLIAMENT STREET

00196767

Digitized with financial assistance from
Shri Brihad Bhartiya Samaj
on 11 March, 2020